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ABSTRACT

Students who left school entirely during the 1984-85 school year, and others who withdrew from regular school and subsequently returned to the district's High School Diploma Program (HSDP), completed questionnaires providing information about their educational values, reasons for leaving school, perceptions of their academic abilities, relationships with school, and peer and support relationships. The returners were also asked their opinions of the HSDP and how the program compared with their previous regular school. The study found that: (1) leavers and returners are less certain of their motivation to learn and their ability to graduate; (2) attendance problems, lack of interest and boredom were the most frequently cited factors in their decision to leave; (3) though the parents' commitment to learning was questionable, academically-related experiences were the dominant factors in students' decisions to leave school; and (4) returners liked the HSDP administrative arrangements and educational characteristics. The authors developed an educational empowerment theory that a student's image of school as a place to be successful determines the student's persistence. The authors recommend changes in the educational philosophy and actions of the school to create a structure and curriculum that addresses everyone's need for success, approval, challenge, and meaning. (PS)

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San Diego City Schools
PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION DIVISION

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THE 1984-85 SCHOOL LEAVER AND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDE STUDY

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RESEARCH DEPARTMENT REPORT

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THE 1984-85 SCHOOL LEAVER AND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDE STUDY

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SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division
Research Department

THE 1984-85 SCHOOL LEAVER AND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ATTITUDE STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. ISSUE/CONCERN

The district's 1979-80 and 1982-83 school leaver studies reported many characteristics of school leavers, such as their racial/ethnic identification, sex, and withdrawal category. However, these studies did not provide any information about leavers' perceptions and opinions of themselves or school that may have influenced their decisions to leave. Information on these perceptions and opinions can assist the Board of Education, the district's administration, and the school staffs in understanding and addressing the problem of early leaving from the San Diego City Schools.

II. BACKGROUND

No recent district study has examined school leavers' attitudes and perceptions about leaving school. The present study examines the perceptions and opinions of two groups of leavers: Leavers who left school entirely during the 1984-85 school year and Returners who withdrew from regular school and subsequently entered the district's High School Diploma Program (HSDP).

Both Leavers and Returners completed questionnaires that collected information about their reasons for leaving school, educational values, perceptions of their academic abilities, and relationships with school. In addition, the Returners were asked for their opinions of the HSDP and how the program compared with their previous regular school.

Data are analyzed separately for the Leaver and Returner groups and as a combined group called Total Leavers. This report compares the findings for these three groups. In addition, the racial/ethnic identity, sex, grade level, and ages of each group are compared to data from the district's 1982-83 School Leaver Study. Also reported are frequency responses to various factors and attitudes specified in the study questionnaires.

Cross-tabulations for selected demographic data are made and reported and the Returners' perceptions and attitudes toward their regular school and toward the HSDP are analyzed and compared.

An educational empowerment theory is developed to aid in the analysis and interpretation of the study's data. This theory suggests that the experience of school as an environment in which the student is successful or unsuccessful will tend to empower or disempower the student with respect to academic tasks. For those who are continuously disempowered (perceived by themselves and the school as persistently unsuccessful), relief from the frustration of school may eventually come by leaving school. See pages 10-14 for a fuller explanation of this theory.

III. FINDINGS

Data analyses concentrate on three major areas regarding both Leavers and Returners: self-images and values; relationships with regular school; and peer and support relationships. In addition, Returner perceptions of the High School Diploma Program and its effects on their self-images, school values, and relationship to the program are examined. Highlights of the findings follow:

Self-Images and Values. Leavers and Returners believe learning and graduating are important. However, they are less certain of their motivation to learn and their ability to graduate.

Relationship with School. Six of the seven most frequently cited factors in the decision to leave school involved academic experience. Fifty-seven percent of the Leavers and Returners said that lack of interest in and boredom with school were factors in their decision to leave. These were the second and third most cited factors. The most frequently cited factor was attendance problems, which may be related to lack of interest and boredom.

Many responses to an open-ended question about what might have retained them in regular school suggested that classes and school be more closely related to preparation for work, careers, and "the real world."

The study found that 28 percent of the Leavers had been held back at least once. Among Hispanic leavers, 39 percent had been held back. This becomes a performance disadvantage since present performance is dependent upon prior performance for prerequisite knowledge and skills and a sense of confidence generated from successful experiences.

Thirty-eight percent of the Leavers and Returners felt uncertain that teachers cared about their learning or were to some degree certain that teachers did not care.

School counselors were not regarded as significant factors in either the Leavers' or Returners' regular school experience; they neither caused them problems nor were very helpful.

Peer and Support Relationships. Both Leavers and Returners felt they had friends in school and that other students were generally friendly towards them. However, the study also found that one-third of the leavers felt lonely in school.

Leavers and Returners said their parents expected them to learn in school. However, 33 percent had a sibling who also had left school before graduating. This calls into question the parents' behavioral commitment to learning and school.

Seventy percent of both leavers groups said they have a friend who also is a school leaver. This suggests that they associate with those who, like themselves, are not academically successful and perhaps are alienated.

Some Leavers and Returners leave school for reasons external to school. Forty percent said family problems or responsibilities and 26 percent cited work responsibilities as factors in their leaving. Nevertheless, the overall sense of the findings is that academically-related experiences are the dominant factors in students' decisions to leave school.

The High School Diploma Program. The Returners indicated that they liked and appreciated the program. Furthermore, participation in this program seems to have had positive effects on their classroom-related attitudes.

Comparisons of Before-HSDP attitude responses with After-HSDP responses show that Returners had a greater appreciation for the importance of learning; a stronger desire to learn; a stronger perception that teachers were on their side; an increased perception that their instruction related more to work or careers; and a stronger sense of an ability to graduate.

Returners cited several characteristics of the HSDP that may explain their changes in educational attitudes. They liked the administrative arrangements of the program, including: the short school day; the 3 p.m. starting time; no classes on Fridays; and the short, 6-week sessions. The schedule was viewed as very convenient, enabling many to work during the morning and early afternoon.

HSDP Returners also liked the educational characteristics of the program, including being able to work at their own pace in a relaxed, noncompetitive, and unstressful atmosphere. They said that teachers were attentive, helpful, and caring and treated them as adults. About 19 percent of those responding mentioned that the HSDP gave them a "second chance" to graduate.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

There are two basic ways to consider school leaving. One is to focus on the individual leaver. Studies using this perspective assume that school leaving is an isolated problem that can be treated on its own terms. This has been overwhelmingly the perspective of school dropout research. Yet after years of research producing rather consistent findings, attrition rates across the nation are increasing rather than decreasing. The present study, to a large extent, falls within this traditional research focus on the individual. However, it also reflects another focus.

The other basic orientation towards school leaving focuses on the system from which the individual leaves rather than on the individual leaving. Rather than assuming that the student failed the system, this approach assumes that the system failed the student. This orientation treats school leaving as an integral outcome of a complex of interacting school and student factors. Very little research has been conducted focusing on the school. The present study does focus on the school when comparing Returners' reactions to regular school with their reactions to a different type of school, the High School Diploma Program.

While both orientations are valid for research purposes, a focus on schools, unlike a focus on the individual leaver, provides possibilities for making changes that may make a difference in attrition rates. The findings of this study suggest that the academic activities of regular schools are uninteresting and boring to many students. Many students find school boring because it is structured in such a way that their academic performances are consistently and predominantly unsuccessful. For others, perhaps a much larger proportion than we might imagine, school is boring because it is not sufficiently challenging and rewarding. This study also indicates that schools have not yet provided every student with a concrete reason to participate fully in day-to-day classroom work.

The study's findings about HSDP indicate that different school structures may have different effects upon students. Some structures are more likely to retain certain students than other structures. The HSDP is structured in a way that removes fear of failure for poorly performing students and empowers students to be academically successful with self-paced, short courses.

Working out a structure and curriculum that addresses everyone's need for success, approval, challenge, and meaning will be a challenging and rewarding task for teachers and administrators.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Philosophy:

- Reinforce the philosophy that the challenge is to make school work for every student.

- Assume that students who leave school before graduating are acting reasonably, given their school experiences and circumstances, and that if provided substantially different experiences and circumstances they may not leave.

- Reinforce the perspective that schools have the major responsibility and the power to retain students and, therefore, many solutions that reduce student attrition should be implemented at the school level.

Actions:

Schools should learn more about and better understand the problem of school leavers. In addition, schools should recognize their responsibility and power to take direct action to address the problem. Such action might include:

- Charging school staff members with learning about factors in school leaving and their responsibility and power to reduce student attrition.

- Strengthening the diverse learning environments, processes, and school structures that now exist and help students to enter and leave these with relative freedom.

- Enlisting faculty members as advocates for the school success of potential school leavers.

- Incorporating some features of the High School Diploma Program into an alternative school-within-a-school program available to potential school leavers. The program features should include:

    - flexible schedules and hours;
    - shortened school days;
    - shortened time required to achieve course credits;
    - reduced class size; and
    - allowing students to progress through the curriculum at their own pace.

The district should continue to study secondary school students' school experiences to refine its knowledge about that experience.

VI. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Budget impacts will depend upon specific action steps adopted for dropout prevention.

I. ISSUE/CONCERN

The district's 1979-80 and 1982-83 school leaver studies reported many characteristics of school leavers, such as their racial/ethnic identification, sex, and withdrawal category. However, these studies did not provide any information about leavers' perceptions and opinions of themselves or school that may have influenced their decisions to leave. Information on these perceptions and opinions can assist the Board of Education, the district's administration and the school staffs in understanding and addressing the problem of early leaving from the San Diego City Schools.

II. BACKGROUND

Purpose of the Study

No recent district research project has studied students' attitudes and perceptions about school leaving. This study examines such attitudes and perceptions for two groups of school leavers: those who left school entirely and those who withdrew from regular school and subsequently entered the district's High School Diploma Program (HSDP).

Definitions of Leaver and Returner

This study collected, analyzed, and compared data for two separate groups of former regular school students. These groups are:

- o Leavers. Former grade 9-12 students who left the district's regular junior and senior high schools during school year 1984-1985 and who were not known to have returned to regular school or an alternative educational program. Specifically, this group consists of all students who were exempted from school attendance during the school year for full-time employment, mental conditions interfering with school attendance, hardship or pregnancy and who did not return to school or enter an alternative educational program before June 18. In addition, this group includes students who left between April 1 and June 18 as married, as over 18 years old, or as whereabouts unknown. (The categories of student withdrawals are the same as those used to define school leaver in previous district studies of this problem).

- o Returners. Students who had left regular junior or senior high school, subsequently enrolled in the district's High School Diploma Program (HSDP) and were present during the week of May 16, 1985.

The High School Diploma Program

The High School Diploma Program (HSDP) offers students 16 to almost 20 years of age an alternative way of attaining a high school diploma. Currently, it is available at eight high school locations: Henry, Hoover, Kearny, Lincoln, Mission Bay, Morse, Point Loma, and San Diego. Each site program serves between 50 and 150 students at any time. About 2,000 students enroll in the program each year. The HSDP operates during the regular school year and, beginning in June 1986, a summer session is offered.

The program enrolls two types of students: "concurrent" students who are also enrolled at a regular district high school and "adult" students who have been exempted from regular school attendance to enroll in the program or are over 18 years old (adults include former district students and students who left regular schools in other school districts). The concurrent students generally attend the HSDP to make up credit deficiencies so they can graduate on time. Adults are working toward graduation through the High School Diploma Program. Enrollment is about evenly divided between these two categories of students. The Returners examined in this study are a sample of adult HSDP students; no concurrent students are included.

The program's coordinator describes the HSDP as a small-scale school that is pragmatically and flexibly organized to help its students attain a high school diploma. The program differs from a regular school in that:

- HSDP classrooms average between 20 and 30 students, somewhat less than the number of students in regular school classrooms;
- Students may take no more than two courses during each of the five sessions offered each year;
- Sessions are six weeks in length;
- Classes meet for two and one-half hours, four days each week during afternoon and evening hours;
- Attendance is voluntary;
- Credit for course work requires meeting specified attendance and work standards, including course proficiency requirements;
- There are no failing grades -- if a student does not meet attendance and work requirements he or she does not receive credit for the course;
- Course work is self-paced -- students are not required to progress through the curriculum at a specified pace or at the pace of the class; and

- Students who do not meet all requirements for course credit during one six-week session may continue the course in another session.

Although the HSDP and the regular school programs differ in these administrative and operational ways, the HSDP courses are comparable to those of regular high school. Textbooks are selected from the district's approved textbook list. Passing an HSDP course requires passing all district proficiency requirements for that course.

Each HSDP site is staffed full-time by counselors and teachers choosen from among those working in regular district schools. The library at each site is open at least one evening each week and is staffed by a regular district librarian.

The program is self-supporting. The earning of funds for salaries, books and support services is based upon the number of hours students actually attend. The program coordinator suggests that this increases the responsiveness of the program and its staff to the needs and satisfaction of its students. Staff who are not able to maintain student interest or effectively educate them are replaced.

Although the HSDP offers an alternative way of attaining a high school diploma, the total experience for HSDP participants differs from that provided by the regular high schools. The HSDP does not have a high degree of classroom student interaction. Students are self-paced so that classes usually have students working on different areas of a subject. For example, in a mathematics class, some students may study algebra while others work on geometry. Opportunities for total group activities are infrequent. Energy levels of both teachers and students are sometimes lower than those of regular day school classes because class hours are in the afternoon and evening. The HSDP offers few electives and there are no extracurricular activities. In other words, the HSDP is not a "full-service" high school, but a pragramatic and focused program for obtaining course credits and a diploma.

Research Questions

This study addresses four general research questions:

- What are the perceptions and attitudes of Leavers that contributed to their decisions to leave school?

- What are the perceptions and attitudes of Returners (adult HSDP participants) that contributed to their decisions to leave regular school?

- What factors attracted Returners to the High School Diploma Program?

- How do Returners' opinions about their regular day schools and the HSDP compare?

Methodology

Between April 1 and July 15, 1985, district counselors in the Guidance Services Department administered a questionnaire to Leavers about their reasons for leaving school and their perceptions of their former regular schools (see appendix A). Many persons of the following subgroups of Leavers were contacted:

- Students officially exempted during the 1984-85 school year.

- Students who between April 1 and June 18 left regular school as married, as over 18 years old, or as whereabouts unknown. (Leaving for marriage or being over 18 years old does not require exemption.)

Most of the questionnaires were administered through telephone interviews conducted by district counselors and guidance aides during the Guidance Services Department's annual summer exemption follow-up activities.

Returners in the HSDP completed a very similar, expanded questionnaire under the direction of HSDP program counselors (see Appendix B). The High School Diploma Program Questionnaire was expanded to ask questions about that program as well as questions about the Returner's regular school experience and attitudes. This questionnaire was administered during the week of May 16, 1985.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed for the Leaver and Returner groups separately and as a combined group, referred to as the "Total Leaver" group. This report compares the findings for these three groups. In addition, the racial/ethnic identity, sex, grade level, and age distributions for each group were compared to those from the 1982-83 School Leaver Study to assess how representative these groups are of the district's school leavers.

Data for each group are analyzed along the four demographic variables. The frequency response to various factors and attitudes specified in the questionnaires are reported. Some cross-tabulations to selected demographic data are made and the Returners perceptions and attitudes towards their regular school and the HSDP are analyzed and compared.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The organization of the High School Diploma Program and the timing and methodology of data collection limited the scope of the study in certain ways. Regarding Leavers these limitations are:

- The Leaver sample is neither the total population of 1984-85 Leavers nor a random sample. The Leaver group includes those former students who were officially exempted by district counselors during the 1984-85 school year as well as some students who left during the second semester who did not require an exemption. These latter students are listed as married, as over 18 years old, or as whereabouts unknown. Students leaving in these categories before April 1, 1985 were not contacted.

- The district counselors who attempted to contact Leavers may not have made equal attempts to reach all Leavers. At the time of the summer follow-ups district counselors were unsure about who was to be contacted and how many attempts were to be made to contact each Leaver. Contacting the married, over 18, and the whereabouts unknown was not a usual part of the summer follow-up program and may have received less attention than the follow-up of students who had been officially exempted. If follow-up efforts were uneven, it may be that the Leavers who were exempt are overrepresented in the Leaver sample.

The limitations regarding Returners are:

- The Returner sample includes regular school leavers from the 1984-85 school year and immediate prior school years. The HSDP program is open to all leavers who are at least 16 but not yet 20 years old, regardless of when they left regular school.

- The Returner sample may include some students who are leavers from other school districts. HSDP serves all those who meet its entrance criteria, regardless of the school district in which the student last attended school.

- The Returner sample is neither the total population of adult HSDP participants nor a random sample. It is comprised of adult HSDP participants who attended the fifth and final HSDP session of the 1984-85 school year and who were present during the week of May 16 when the questionnaire was administered.

- The instructions for administering the questionnaire were not correctly followed at one HSDP site. At that site Returners apparently were instructed to ignore questions relating to their former regular school.

In spite of these limitations, this study yields valuable insights into the quality of the school experience for Leavers and Returners. Data on the attitudes and experiences of 502 individuals who chose to leave the regular schools are captured and provide much valuable information that can assist the Board of Education, district administrators, and district staff who work directly with the students in dealing with the problem.

III. FINDINGS/DISCUSSION

Demographics

The numbers of Leavers and Returners were tabulated by sex, ethnicity, grade level and age. The definition of Leaver for the present study is the same as that used in the earlier 1982-83 School Leaver Study. Since the 1982-83 Leaver sample included 100 percent of all 1982-83 leavers, comparing the present Leaver sample to it provides an opportunity to assess how well the present nonrandom Leaver sample represents district high school leavers.

There is no sample from a previous district study comparable to the present study's Returner sample. However, comparing the Returner sample to both the present Leaver sample and the 1982-83 Leaver sample provides an opportunity to assess how similar Returners are to Leavers.

Table 1 displays the number of individuals participating in this study and their gender. Included are 355 Leavers and 147 Returners. Total Leavers, the combination of Leavers and Returners, are 502.

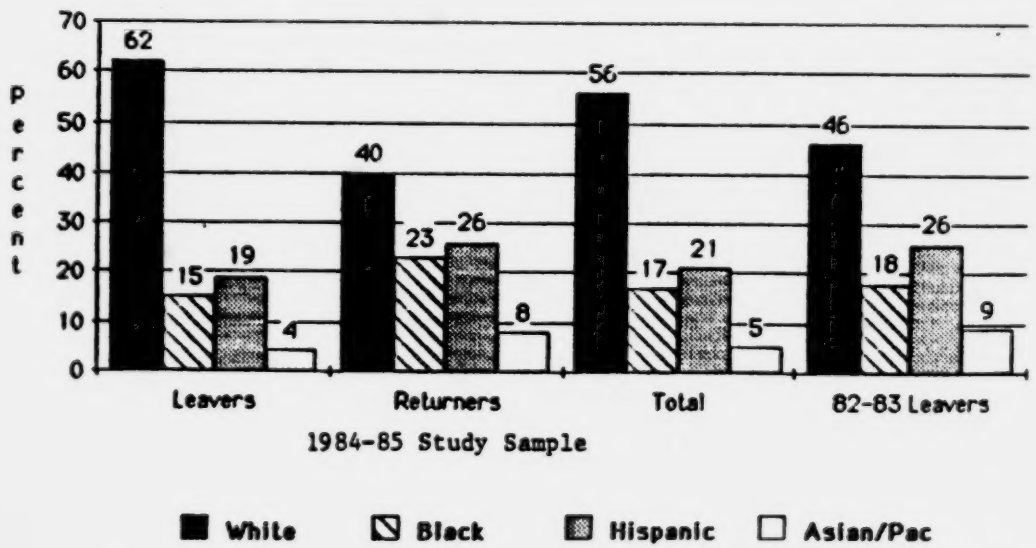
This table shows that there are no important differences in the distribution of male and female Leavers, Returners, Total Leavers and 1982-83 Leavers. The ratio of males to females among Returners nearly matches the 1982-83 district leavers ratio of 54 percent males to 46 percent females. The Leaver group is divided evenly between males and females and although this ratio differs from the 1982-83 Leavers' ratio, the difference is not great. The 51 percent male/49 percent female ratio of the Total group is about the same as the 1982-83 Leavers' ratio.

TABLE 1
SAMPLE NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION BY SEX

Group	Percent Male	Percent Female	Total Number
Returners	54	46	147
Leavers	50	50	355
Total	51	49	502
1982-83 Leavers	53	47	1,602

Figure 1 compares the racial/ethnic makeup of the 1984-85 study sample groups with that of the 1982-83 Leavers. In 1982-83, 46 percent of the district Leavers were White, 26 percent Hispanic, 18 percent Black and 9 percent Asian/Pacific Islander students.

FIGURE 1
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEAVER GROUPS BY ETHNICITY



The racial/ethnic makeup of the Leaver sample is not similar to that of the 1982-83 Leavers. The 1984-85 Leavers have a higher proportion of White Leavers and lower proportions of Hispanic, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander Leavers than the 1982-83 Leaver sample. Also, this 1984-85 Leaver sample was not randomly selected and therefore is not representataive of 1984-85 Leavers.

The Returner sample has a racial/ethnic distribution very similiar to that of the 1982-83 Leavers.

Figure 2 displays the distribution of the Leaver and the Returner groups among grade levels. In this analysis, the present Leaver group's distribution closely matches that of the 1982-83 Leavers. Over 60 percent left during the tenth and eleventh grades while less than 22 percent left during the senior year.

The Returners were asked their current grade level, not their level when they left regular high school. Therefore, Returner grade data are not comparable to that for Leavers.

In contrast, more than 50 percent of Returners were in their senior year at the time of their interview. Although this data is not strictly comparable to that for Leavers, the larger proportion of seniors among Returners than Leavers may indicate that the HSDP is attractive to former students with relatively small graduation credit deficits, which likely is not true of Leavers in general.

FIGURE 2
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEAVER GROUPS BY GRADE

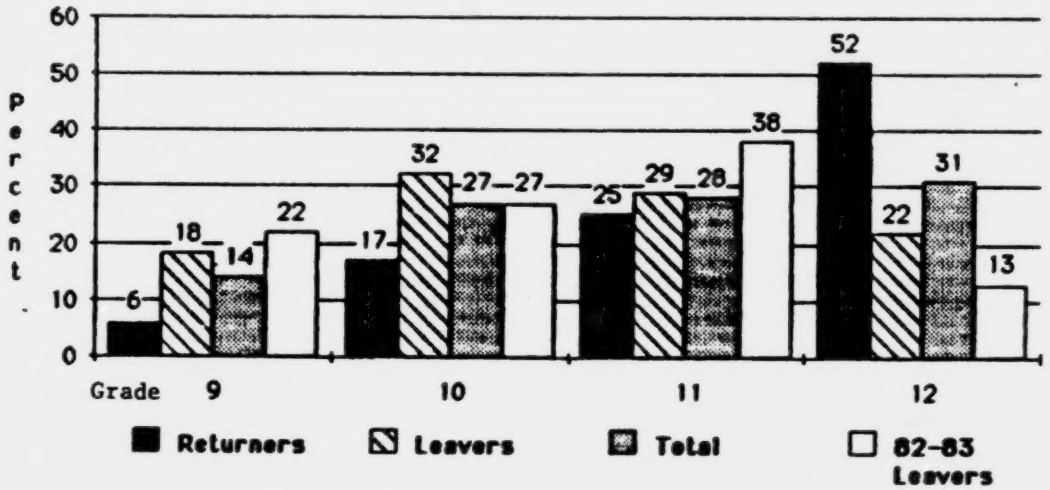


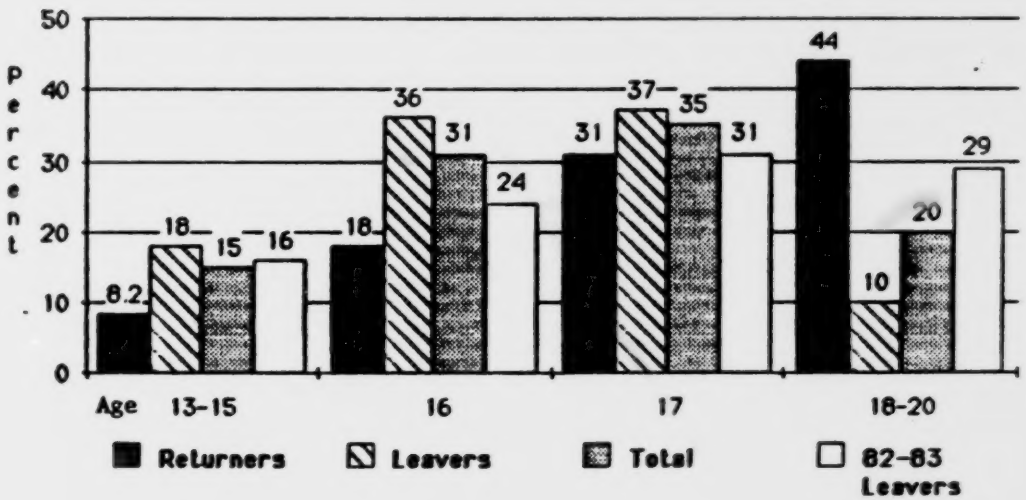
Figure 3 presents data on the age distribution of Leavers and Returners. Among the Leaver sample, there is a greater proportion of those aged 16 and a smaller proportion of those aged 18 than in the 1982-83 Leaver sample. Among Leavers, 36 percent as compared to 24 percent among the 1982-83 Leavers were aged 16 and the Leaver sample has only 10 percent aged 18 compared to 26 percent for the 1982-83 Leavers.

Among Returners, there is a higher proportion of persons aged 18 to 20 than there is among the 1982-83 Leaver group. This higher proportion of older students among Returners may be explained by the fact that the HSDP is open only to students 16 to 20 years of age and it may be especially attractive to students who feel too old for regular school.

The composition of the Leaver sample differs from that of the 1982-83 Leavers in that it has a greater proportion of Whites and students who left school at ages 16 or 17. The Returner group differs from the Leaver group in its ethnicity, grade, and age distributions. Among Returners, Whites are less represented and seniors and those aged 18-20 are more represented. The age and grade differences are explained by the criteria for the HSDP program and perhaps different levels of graduation credit deficit for Leavers and Returners. When Returners and Leavers are combined into a Total Leaver group, there is not a large difference between its sex, ethnicity, grade, and age distributions and those of the 1982-83 Leaver sample.

For the purposes of this study, the demographic makeup of the sample groups may reasonably represent district Leavers and Returners of recent years.

FIGURE 3
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEAVER GROUPS BY AGE



School Success and Failure: The Educational Empowerment Model

Why do students leave school? Although the research literature is repleat with empirical findings on the correlates of school leaving, theoretical frameworks that tie factors together in causal relationships are almost completely absent. This section outlines a theory that enables a more systematic analysis of the study's data and may, in turn, provide support for the major features of the theory.

Studies have shown that the great majority of school leavers are, and perceive themselves to be, persistently poor academic performers [Rumberger, 1981]. The district's 1982-83 School Leaver Study [Barr, 1985] found that 72 percent of the San Diego Unified School District leavers had grade point averages below 2.0; 52 percent were in the lowest quartile in reading achievement; and 44 percent were in the lowest mathematics achievement quartile. The school experience for these students is a highly dissatisfying experience because it is one of almost daily frustration and failure [Doss and Holley, 1985; Davis and Doss, 1982]. Many who stay in school may also be dissatisfied. These students may express their dissatisfaction as passive resistance to learning, a lack of involvement in school related-activities, discipline problems, or even vandalism.

On the other hand, many students are very successful in the very same schools. Clearly, the subjective experience of two students participating in the same educational environment may be quite different. Subjective experience is a function both of the characteristics of the environment and of the person participating in it.

The interaction between the student and the school can be characterized as empowering or disempowering. A teacher can empower or disempower a student to learn. A student can empower or disempower a teacher to teach. Although student and teacher can each empower or disempower the other, the teacher has the primary empowerment role. Teachers, and the school, are ultimately responsible for whether or not the relationship with each and every student is empowering.

Unfortunately, studies indicate that interactions of mutual lack of respect, care and commitment are often established between poorly performing students and school personnel and that poor performers experience failure, inadequacy, frustration, and eventually alienation from school. Poor performers feel unwanted. They say that teachers want to get rid of them rather than give them attention and support. Understandably, they lose respect, care and commitment for their teachers and school. As commitment and participation levels decline, academic performance deteriorates even further. Poor performance becomes self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling. This is often complicated and reinforced by an alienation from most of their more successful peers and from mainstream society (Wehlage, 1983).

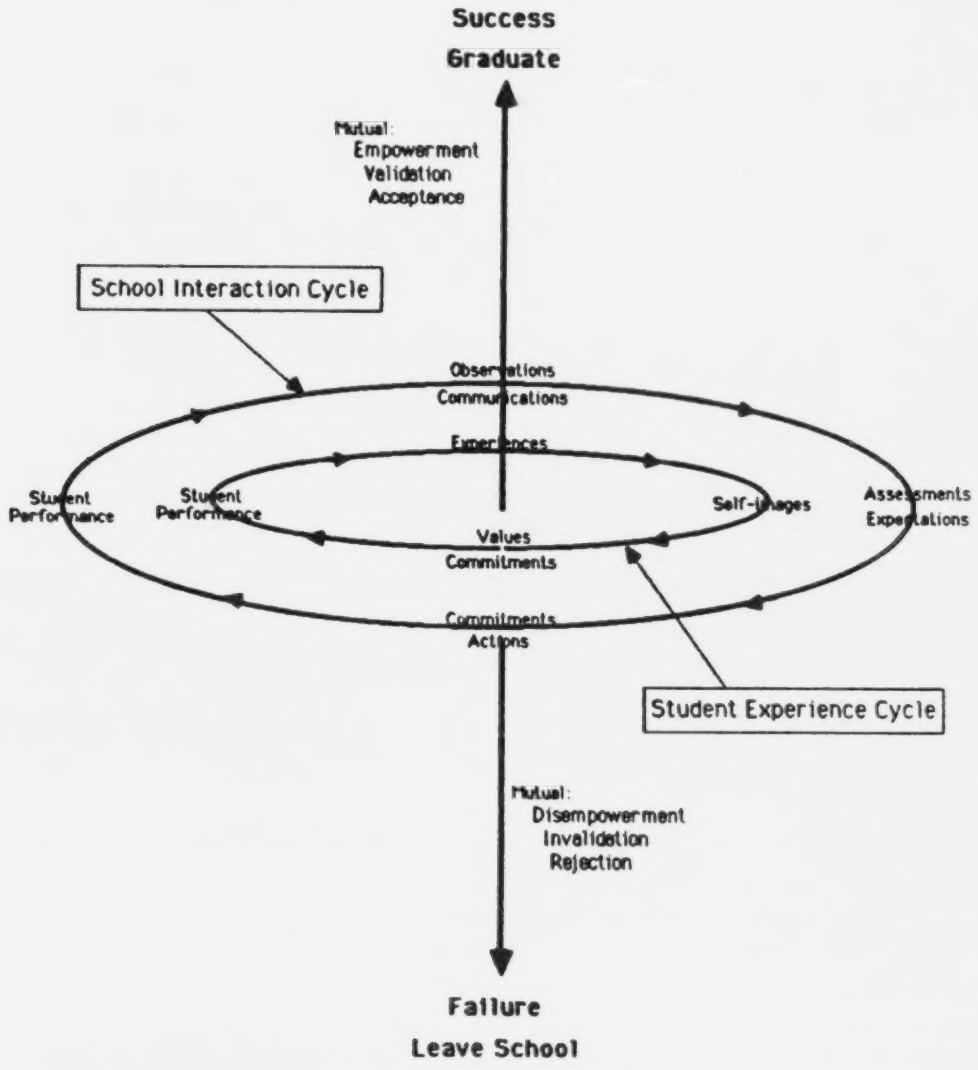
Good academic performers experience school as a place to demonstrate competence and success. Naturally, an environment providing and enabling success is honored and appreciated by those who are successful in it. Commitment and levels of participation are maintained or increased. Experiences of competence and success become self-reinforcing and self-fulfilling.

The 1982-83 School Leaver Study found evidence for such self-reinforcing and mutual interactions of empowerment and disempowerment. That study found that those students who have school performance disadvantages, including poor prior academic performance, low achievement and limited English proficiency, leave school at rates five times those of students without such disadvantages. Furthermore, they leave at rates 10 to 15 times those of students with performance advantages such as excellent prior academic performance, high achievement scores, or participation in gifted or magnet programs.

These observations are incorporated in a model diagrammed in Figure 4. The model proposes two sets of interactive and cyclically connected factors related to school performance. Depending upon which direction the factors take, positive or negative, a relationship of mutual empowerment or disempowerment between the student and the school is established. Increasingly powerful positive factors interact to produce higher levels of mutual empowerment, successful performance, and mutual acceptance. This is represented by an upward direction in Figure 4. In time, maintanance of a sufficiently high level of mutual empowerment will lead to a student's graduation. On the other hand, interactions of increasingly powerful negative factors will produce a downward movement toward increasing mutual disempowerment, failing performance, and mutual rejection. In time, a student caught in this spiral will decide to leave school if possible. In this model, every factor is both a cause and an effect and may have either a positive or negative direction.

The inner circle of the figure represents a student's experience cycle of interaction with the school environment. In a positive cycle, good school performances lead to experiences of competence, achievement, and acknowledgment. Positive experiences maintain or improve the student's self-images of his or her abilities and skills and raise his or her self-esteem and confidence levels. These positive images and high self-esteem levels condition the student's school-related values and choices, such as, actively participating in class. Positive value commitments lead back to the maintenance or improvement of the student's academic performance.

FIGURE 4
THE EDUCATIONAL EMPOWERMENT MODEL



A student's experience cycle may be negative. Poor performances lead to experiences of inadequacy which lead to poor self-images of abilities which lead to anti-school values which lead back to poor performances. The desire to escape an increasingly intolerable situation develops and eventually results in the choice to leave school in to other expressions of dissatisfaction.

The outer circle in Figure 4 represents factors in the relationship between school personnel and the student. A positive cycle may begin with good student academic performance. Teachers perceive instances of competence and achievement and provide positive communications of acknowledgement and support to the student. A series of competent performances leads a teacher to develop positive, relatively stable assessments and expectations of a student's abilities, skills, and attitudes. Positive assessments and expectations, in turn, influence the teacher to maintain or improve commitment to the student and to maintain or raise demand levels for academic performance. Positive levels of commitment, demands and expectations have a positive effect upon the student's performance.

When the student/school interaction cycle is negative, a student's poor academic performance may lead to lower teacher expectations. Teachers may develop images of the student as having poor abilities, poor attitudes, or learning problems that may be judged to be beyond the teacher's ability to remediate. Attention and assistance are no longer offered. The teachers commitment becomes reserved for those they believe are willing and able to benefit from it and others may be merely tolerated in the classroom. The student experiencing this lack of teacher commitment loses respect for the teacher and interest in the subject. A cycle of mutual lack of respect, care, and commitment is established between the poorly performing student and the teacher.

A metaphor may help to illustrate further features of the empowerment model. Just as a gyroscope, once brought to a high speed, tends to maintain its speed and stability, so likewise, positive factors once established reinforce each other in a stable, repeating cycle of interactions. Interacting positive factors become self-fulfilling. Like a spinning gyroscrope, an established cycle requires only a small amount of outside energy to maintain its momentum. Small additional amounts of energy further improve interactions of factors, making an already effective cycle even more effective.

On the other hand, it takes considerable energy to slow a spinning gyroscope down, stop it, reverse it, and bring it to a high speed in the opposite direction. The empowerment model proposes a similiar circumstance with respect to established cycles, whether positive or negative. Established cycles tend to persist and are difficult to stop.

For example, once a poor performer decides he or she has inadequate abilities in a subject such as mathematics, then it may take considerable energy in the form of repeated successful performances and supportive communications before the student reverses his or her image of inadequacy. Furthermore, even when a negative cycle is successfully shifted to a positive one, a high level of energy may still be required to bring the newly positive cycle up to a stable, self-maintaining speed.

Data from Leaver and Returner questionnaires in the present study are analyzed and discussed in light of the empowerment model. The analysis begins by examining the data for information about Leavers' and Returners' attitudes regarding schooling and their school abilities. Next, data related to their relationship with the school and its staff are examined. These two issues -- self-images and learning attitudes, and relationship with school -- address the heart of the empowerment model.

The major factors of the student experience cycle may be supported or countered by a number of sources. In particular, a leaver's family or friends may provide validation or invalidation of his or her self-image, attitudes, and values. An examination of such support or nonsupport is the third major focus of analysis.

The fourth and final area of analysis is the response of Returners to the High School Diploma Program. Here the questions of whether the HSDP has an effect on learning and self-images, school relations, and types of support are addressed within the context of the empowerment model.

Values Regarding Self and Schooling

The school leaver questionnaire asked Leavers to indicate a level of agreement with fourteen statements about their school experiences and expectations. For example, Leavers were asked whether they strongly disagree, disagree, are uncertain, agree, or strongly agree with the statement, "I believe learning is important." For analytical purposes, these responses are coded from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree (see Appendix A). These statements and related responses are referred to as leaver "attitudes".

The Returners to the High School Diploma Program were asked to respond to two similar sets of attitude statements. One set ascertained their feelings about their regular high school experience. The other set of the attitude statements referred to Returners' current participation in the

High School Diploma Program. The statements contained in these two sets are essentially the same; they differ only in their time and program referent. One statement concerning participation in school activities was dropped from the second set because the HSDP program does not offer such activities (see Appendix B.)

In this report, responses by Returners to their earlier regular high school experience are referred to as "Before-HSDP" responses and responses to the HSDP situation are called "After-HSDP" responses.

Unfortunately, due to questionnaire administration problems at one school, about one-third of the HSDP leavers were not asked to respond to the Before-HSDP attitude statements. Therefore, only 93 of 147 HSDP respondents gave Before-HSDP attitude responses while 144 gave After HSDP responses. Despite this loss, it is reasonable to assume that the Before HSDP responses are representative of leavers who enter the High School Diploma Program.

Leaver responses and Before-HSDP Returner responses were combined to produce a Total Leaver group perception of the regular high school. The 461 Total group responses include 93 Before-HSDP Returner responses and 350 Leaver responses.

Table 2 displays Total Leaver responses to five attitude statements that indicate their values and self-assessments regarding school. The table shows the percentage of leavers responding at each of the five agreement levels for each attitude statement. The frequency distributions are summarized in a mean response score, the average response to an attitude statement under the 1 to 5 coding scheme.

Table 2 provides strong evidence that school leavers value learning and graduating from school. On the attitudes, "I believe learning is important" and "I believe it is important to graduate from high school," more than 81 percent strongly agreed and 14 percent agreed, a total positive agreement percentage of 95 percent. The mean response is 4.7 for these two attitudes, the highest agreement level expressed for any attitude in the study.

Table 2 also indicates the Total Leaver responses to the statements, "I really wanted to learn in school" and "I had the necessary abilities to graduate from high school." There is high agreement with these attitude statements.

TABLE 2
VALUE AND SELF-IMAGE ATTITUDE RESPONSES OF TOTAL LEAVER GROUP*
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGREEMENT LEVEL AND SUMMARY MEAN RESPONSE

Attitude	Agreement Level					Mean Level
	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Learning important	0	1	4	14	81	4.7
Important to graduate	2	0	2	14	81	4.7
Wanted to learn	2	3	13	26	56	4.3
Had ability to graduate	2	4	10	21	62	4.4
Expected to graduate	4	2	7	21	65	4.4

* 350 Leavers combined with 93 Returners

N=443 Missing=59

More than 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement related to wanting to learn. The agreement distribution is summarized in the mean response of 4.3. The agreement frequency distribution for "ability to graduate" is similiar and it received a mean agreement response level of 4.4.

The first two attitudes discussed express an opinion of the societal norms regarding the value of learning and graduating; the next two attitudes express a self-assessment or self-image as to whether they wanted to learn and had the ability to learn. The difference in the level of agreement to the first two attitudes (mean response of 4.7 each) and the second two (mean response of 4.3 and 4.4, respectively) may reflect the difference in the nature of the two sets of attitudes. School leavers seem to be slightly less certain about their abilities and motivation for learning than they are about the value or importance of learning and graduating.

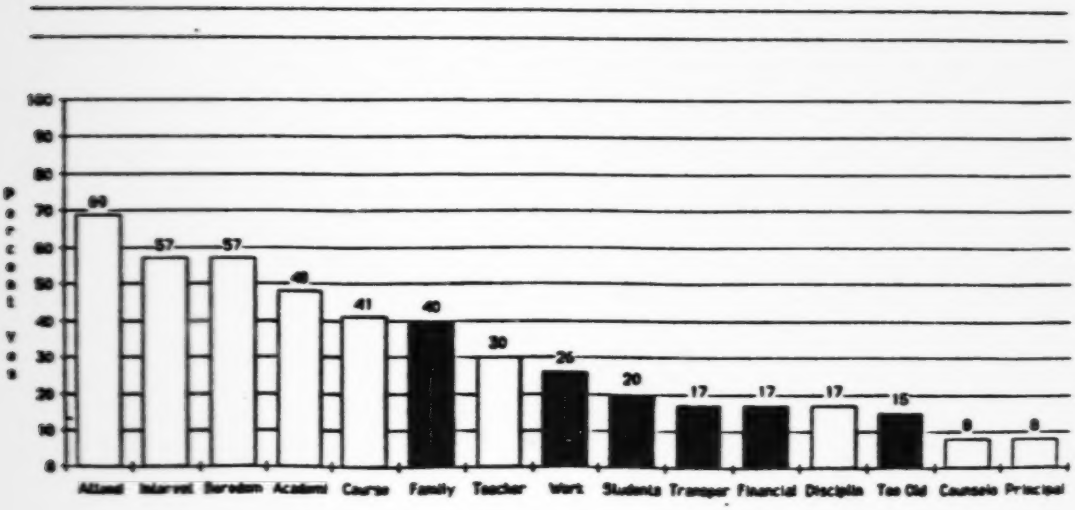
Over 85 percent of the Total Leaver group strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I expected to graduate from high school." The mean response was 4.4. The response pattern to this attitude is very similar to those regarding the desire to learn and the ability to graduate. Again, leavers seem less certain about actually graduating than about the importance of graduating.

Relationship with School

How did these leavers relate to school? Figure 5 displays findings regarding factors that the Total Leaver group reported as "important in [their] decision to leave high school." The respondents answered "yes" or "no" to each of fifteen items and usually indicated that several factors influenced their decision. Hereafter, these items will be referred to as "decision factors" or "factors." Nine of the factors relate to the leavers' relationship with school and are highlighted in the figure.

The fifteen decision factors in Figure 5 are arranged in the rank order of the percentage of positive responses by the Total Leaver group. The attendance problems factor was cited by nearly 70 percent of all leavers. Nearly 60 percent cited lack of interest in and boredom with school; almost 50 percent cited academic problems or grades. The fifth most-cited factor was dislike of a particular course. This factor was cited by 41 percent of all leavers. The five factors cited most often in the decision to leave school relate to the leavers' interactions with the academic program. Furthermore, almost one-third (30 percent) said that problems with teachers were important in their choice to leave school. This is sixth among the most frequently cited school-related factors (and seventh among all factors). Therefore, six of the top seven factors involve the classroom experience.

FIGURE 5
SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS IN THE LEAVING DECISION
RANKED BY PERCENT RESPONDING YES



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The discipline/behavior problems factor is indicated by 17 percent of the leavers as a decision factor, but ranks twelfth among the fifteen factors influencing the leaving decision. The problems with counselors factor and the problems with the principal or vice-principal factor are each mentioned by 8 percent of the leavers. These two factors rank at the very bottom of the fifteen factors as the least frequently cited in the decision to leave school.

Table 2 of the last section indicates that 82 percent of the leavers wanted to learn in school. However, Figure 5 shows that 57 percent cite a lack of interest in school as a factor in deciding to leave. Is this a contradiction? If not, how is it to be reconciled? The following analysis may explain these responses.

Agreement with "I really wanted to learn" may express a desire to be good at the "game" of school. Generally, people want to be good at the activities in which they participate. On the other hand, lack of interest may express the reality of the leaver's participation in the academic game. People normally lose interest in a game when they persistently fail to experience at least a minimum level of mastery -- when they fail to achieve a personally acceptable minimum level of success. Since most school leavers are poor academic performers, it should not be surprising that they have lost interest in the school game.

It is also true that people quickly lose interest in a game that is too easy. And this seems to be the explanation for at least some of the lack of interest in school and current school leaving. Some of the responses to open-ended questions about what might have retained the Leavers and Returners in regular school support this explanation. One student said:

> Gifted classes were not readily available. I got bored with regular classes. I was in gifted classes for nine years, then in high school I was taken out of gifted classes.

Another student suggested adding new programs and commented,

> It's boring and not interesting. Work should be harder and more of a challenge.

A third student said,

> "[Provide] better opportunities to get into accelerated classes even though grades may not have indicated it."

Fifty-seven percent of the leavers also indicated that boredom with school was a chief factor in deciding to leave. The distinction between "lack of interest in school" and "boredom with school" is probably not great, but "boredom with school" more clearly refers to the leavers' actual experience

in school. A student could be bored as a result of previous lack of success and consequently a present inability to fully comprehend what is being covered in class. Boredom may also result from being unable to see any wider meaning, purpose or value in a course or in school.

Both of these interpretations are supported by responses some leavers gave to the open-ended questions about their reasons for leaving school and what the school might have done to retain them. Here are some of those comments:

- Cut the courses that don't have anything to do with making money or a living.
- If classes were not so boring, maybe I would have stayed. There should be more classes to prepare for the real world.
- More programs should be set up to help the student prepare for their future.
- They could have made it more interesting.
- Make courses slower, easier -- like English, history. Mostly lack of interest.
- [I left because of] overall boredom! Wanted to get on with my life.
- Nothing was practical in course work to help deal with life outside of school.
- Relating classes more to careers.

With high levels of lack of interest in and boredom with school, it is not surprising to see high percentages of leavers indicating they had attendance and academic problems, and that there were courses they disliked. These factors seem related in a negative cycle. Poor performance leads to boredom, lack of interest and dislike for certain courses which, in turn, leads to attendance and discipline problems which leads back to poor performance. The empowerment theory suggests that boredom and lack of interest may be symptoms of a self-image of an inability to perform well, a failure to see a purpose or value in school, or lack of an adequate, meaningful challenge.

Academic performance is often dependent upon prior performance. In general, successful prior performance supports current performance by providing required knowledge and skills for dealing with the current subject matter and by providing evidence that one can succeed. Poor prior performance has the opposite effects.

Table 3 shows that many of the Total Leaver group had poor prior performances. The table displays by sex and ethnicity the percentage of these leavers who had been held back at least one grade. Twenty-eight percent have been retained at least once. The proportion is higher among males; one-third had been held back. Among females, one-fifth had been retained a grade.

This table also shows by racial/ethnic identity the proportions of Total Leavers held back. Among Hispanic leavers, 39% have been held back. The proportion held back among White, Black, and Asian/Pacific leavers ranges from 22% to 26%.

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL LEAVER GROUP HELD BACK A GRADE
BY SEX AND ETHNICITY

Characteristic	Percent Held Back
By Sex	
Male	34
Female	21
By Ethnicity	
White	26
Black	26
Hispanic	39
Asian/Pacific	22
Total Leaver Group	28

N=468 Missing=34

Table 4 displays findings regarding attitudes that involve a leaver's relationship to the school. Seventy-two percent of the Total Leaver group agree that they were treated fairly by teachers, counselors, and principals. However, about 11 percent did feel unfairly treated by the school. The open-ended comments suggest that the perceived unfairness generally related to a lack of flexibility or insensitivity on the part of the school. One student wanted to be able to attend half-day but her request was denied. Another wanted to take just the three credits he needed to graduate but was told he had to take six or go to night school. Two complained of a lack of understanding about absences due to illness. Another would have stayed if he hadn't been "kicked out."

TABLE 4
SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDE RESPONSES OF TOTAL LEAVER GROUP
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGREEMENT LEVEL AND SUMMARY MEAN RESPONSE

Attitude	Agreement Level					Mean Level
	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Treated fairly by school	3	8	16	31	41	4.0
Teachers wanted me to learn	7	8	23	26	35	3.7
Courses related to work	12	12	30	25	21	3.3
Counselors were helpful	6	7	16	24	47	4.0
Involved in activities	51	18	12	11	8	2.1

N=443 Missing=59

The mean response to the attitude statement, "I felt my teachers really wanted me to learn in their classes," is 3.7. As a group, leavers are not strongly endorsing this statement. Some 38 percent of the leavers felt uncertain that teachers cared about their learning or were to some degree

certain that teachers did not care. This finding provides some support for the hypothesis of a negative cycle of mutual lack of respect and care between the student and the teacher. In their open-ended comments, some leavers suggest that if their teachers had been more caring they would have remained in school. Consider these leaver comments on what it would have taken to retain them in school:

- o More understanding by teachers.
- o [I] felt teachers weren't understanding of the student.
- o Teachers could have been more helpful.
- o Teacher attitude towards students should be more caring.
- o [Needed] more support from teachers.

The attitude statement, "My teachers related their courses to careers or the world of work," is generally not endorsed by the Total Leaver group. The mean agreement response level is 3.3, just barely above uncertain. Fifty-four percent fail to see teachers relating their courses to work or careers. Many, as indicated by open-ended comments, wanted school related to employment opportunities. This is perhaps an important way to give some purpose or value to schooling that is otherwise boring and uninteresting.

Table 4 shows that most leavers agree that counselors were helpful when they had problems (mean responses of 4.0). However, almost one-third (29 percent) are uncertain or feel that counselors were not helpful. Relationships with counselors are rarely mentioned in open-ended leaver comments. Also, the data of Figure 5 show that problems with counselors is rarely cited as a factor in deciding to leave school.

Not surprisingly, Table 4 findings show that leavers were not involved in school activities. The mean response to "I was involved in school clubs, teams and other school activities," is 2.1, clearly indicating lack of involvement. School is not a place where those who became leavers experienced success, and for that reason they may have had as little to do with it as possible.

Support/Peer Relationships

The empowerment theory suggests that school leavers will tend to seek out associations that support their feelings, opinions, and decisions about

school. Table 5 displays some findings about attitudes that relate to this hypothesis. The table shows that the Total Leaver group asserts that it "had many friends in school" (mean response is an agreement level of 4.3) and that "other students in my school were friendly to me" (mean response also 4.3). Table 5 also indicates leaver feelings of loneliness in school. A majority, (52 percent), strongly disagree with the statement "I felt lonely when I was in school." However, 31 percent are either uncertain or agree with the statement. While most leavers feel they had friends at school and other students were friendly, about one-third felt alone -- perhaps alienated -- in school.

TABLE 5
PEER/SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP ATTITUDE RESPONSES OF TOTAL LEAVER GROUP
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGREEMENT LEVEL AND SUMMARY MEAN RESPONSES

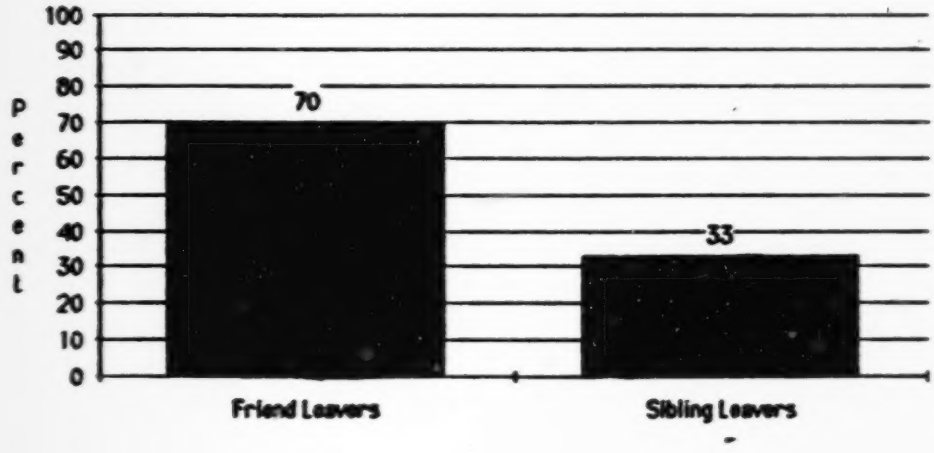
Attitude	Agreement Level					Mean Level
	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
Had school friends	4	5	9	21	61	4.3
Students friendly to me	3	5	10	29	54	4.3
Parents expected learning	1	2	8	18	72	4.6
Felt lonely in school	52	17	10	11	10	2.1

N=443 Missing=59

School leavers also report that "my parents really expected me to learn in school." The agreement level with this statement is a high 4.6. Ninety percent of the leavers either strongly agree or agree with this statement. However, this may be a perception of a parent's belief without giving an indication of whether the parent's behavior supported learning and schooling. Parents may feel a child should stay in school and learn, but if the child is performing poorly they may not demand that the child stay in school or extend themselves to assist the child to perform better.

School leavers have friends in school, but who are they? Do they support leaving or persisting in school? Figure 6 shows that 70 percent of the Total Leaver group have a friend who has also left school. This is evidence that school leavers associate with peers who are likely to support the idea of leaving school. Furthermore, Figure 6 shows that 33 percent of the leavers had a brother or sister who also left school. This tends to suggest that although parents may expect their children to learn in school, their behavior may not be consistent with this expectation or assertive about it. The example of an older sibling leaving school may make the decision to leave easier for the younger children. For example, one student, in an open-ended response to the question about other decision factors said that his older sibling who left school before graduating "set a bad example."

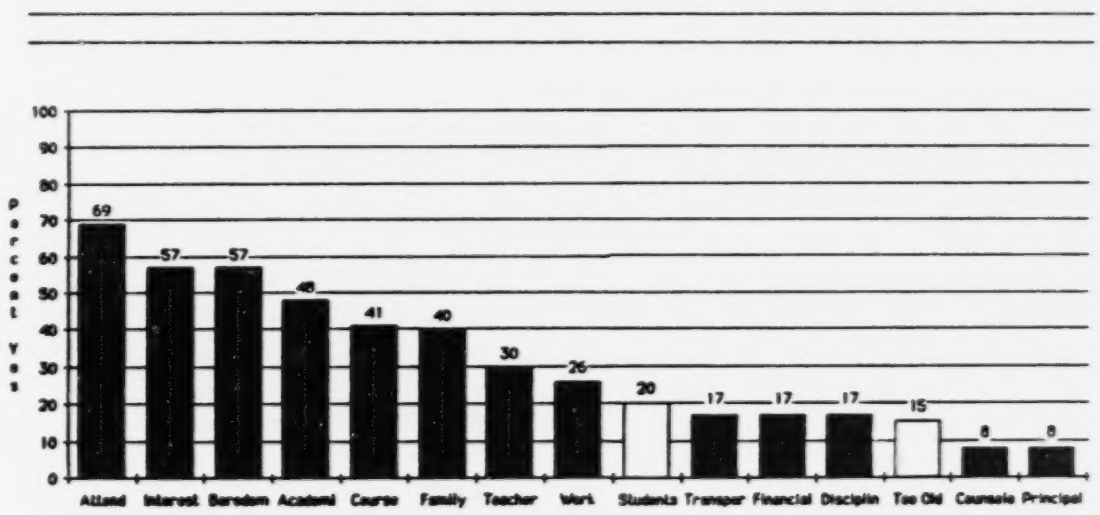
FIGURE 6
PERCENT OF TOTAL LEAVER GROUPS WITH FRIEND OR SIBLING LEAVERS



Another student, in a comment regarding what could have been done to keep him in school, said, "Keep me away from some of my friends." In fact, as shown in Figure 7, 20 percent of the leavers indicate that problems with other students was a factor in their decision to leave school. Evidently, some of these problems are with others the leaver regards as friends. One student complained of being so distracted by other students in class that she couldn't study.

Another aspect of the peer support issue is the question of feeling too old to be in school. Students who are held back a grade or are missing a few credits needed for graduation may feel this way. Fifteen percent of the leavers indicated this feeling affected their decision to leave. One leaver said, "I felt funny about staying back a year [as a senior again and I] wanted to go to work." Another student wanted the school to be "more sensitive to [my] age and help me get into junior year."

FIGURE 7
PEER/SUPPORT FACTORS IN THE LEAVING DECISION

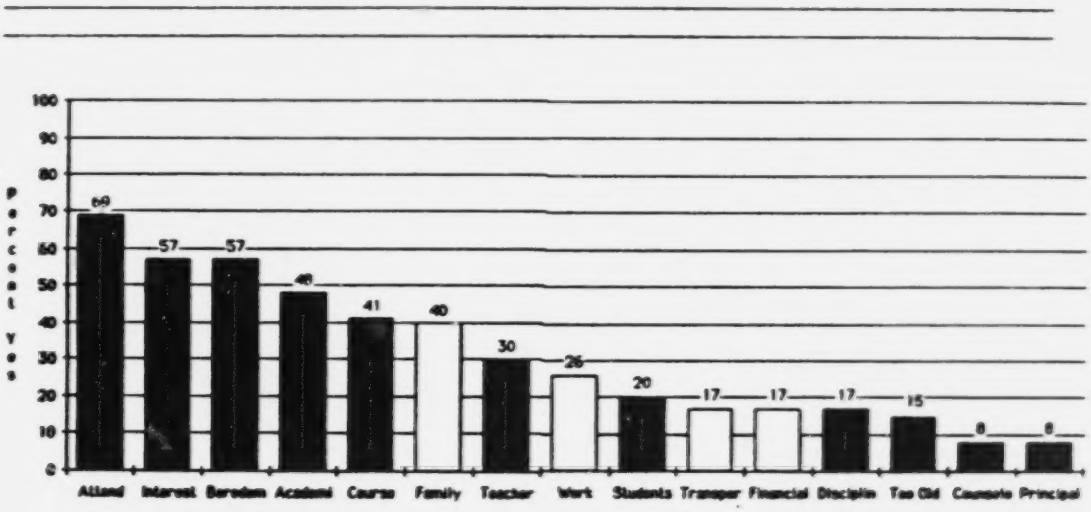


Nonschool Decision Factors

Some students feel pressured to leave school by nonschool factors. Figure 8 shows such findings. The sixth most cited factor is family problems or responsibilities. This is cited by 40 percent of the leavers.

Work responsibilities, the eighth most cited decision factor, is indicated by 26 percent of the leavers. Transportation problems and financial problems are each cited by 17 percent of the leavers. However, when compared to factors directly related to school, these problems are very infrequently mentioned by leavers in open-ended response opportunities.

FIGURE 8
NONSCHOOL FACTORS IN THE LEAVING DECISION

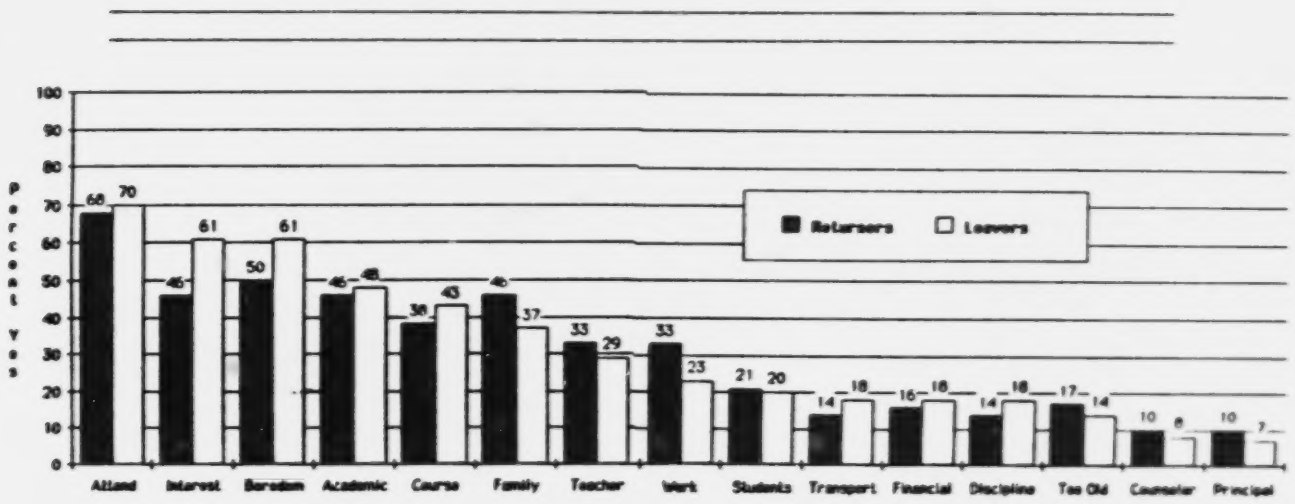


Value of the High School Diploma Program

This section examines the responses of Returners who left regular school and later enrolled in the district's High School Diploma Program for additional insights into school leaving. Figure 9 displays data on decision factors by Returner and Leaver groups. The rank order of the frequency of positive responses to decision factors is very similar for the two groups.

The Returners cite three items related to classroom instruction -- lack of interest, boredom, and dislike for a particular course -- less frequently than Leavers, suggesting that Returners entering the HSDP have a higher interest in school than former students who did not enter the HSDP. Sixty-one percent of the Leavers cite lack of interest as a decision factor compared to 46 percent of the Returners. Likewise, for 61 percent of the Leavers boredom is a factor compared to 50 percent of the Returners. Leavers cite these factors about 25 percent more often than Returners. Regarding dislike for a particular course the difference between the two groups is not as large -- 43 percent of the Leavers compared to 38 percent of the Returners.

FIGURE 9
FACTORS IN LEAVING SCHOOL BY RETURNER AND LEAVER GROUPS
RANKED BY PERCENT RESPONDING YES



This classroom-related difference between Returners and Leavers can be accounted for in at least two ways. One possibility is that Returners were less bored by school and had a greater interest in school than Leavers at the time the decision to leave was made, but other factors more external to school made it difficult for them to continue with regular school. This hypothesis is supported by the differences in Returner and Leaver responses to the family and work responsibility factors. Returners cite these two factors 25 percent more frequently than Leavers; 46 percent of the Returners cite family responsibilities compared to 37 percent of the Leavers; and 33 percent of Returners cite work responsibilities compared to 23 percent for Leavers. Perhaps the Returners' higher interest in school may explain why these former students entered the HSDP and others who left regular schools did not.

Another interpretation of the finding that Returners cited classroom-related factors less frequently than Leavers is that participation in the HSDP program may have revived their interest in school. In looking back, Returners would cite lack of interest and boredom less frequently than they otherwise might have.

This hypothesis is supported by HSDP students' comments about why they liked the program. Some of those comments follow:

- Interesting classes most of the time.

- When I first came I wasn't really interested -- but I am willing to learn. There are a lot of subjects I like.

- We can work at our own pace.

- You're more free to do what you want and you have more time to study and you also get to work at your own pace and you're not getting rushed.

- Because they give you longer classes to learn more and because it is fun and you get along with your friends and teachers make class interesting and fun.

- It is less boring than day school. And it makes people work more and it is faster and you don't waste your time taking other classes that you'll never learn anything.

Evidence that the HSDP improves Returners' classroom attitudes is suggested in Table 6. This table compares Returners' responses on attitude statements about their regular school experience ("Before-HSDP") to corresponding statements about their HSDP experience ("After-HSDP)." There are few differences between Before and After responses on attitudes not directly related to the educational experience. Returners do indicate they may have fewer friends in the program as compared to regular school. The Returners' perceptions of the importance of graduating and the expectation of graduating have not changed. Neither have their perceptions of the friendliness of school, loneliness in school, or parents' expectations for learning in school changed.

However, there have been some changes in attitudes that directly relate to learning. In looking back on their regular school experience, Returners expressed a mean agreement level of 4.5 to the statement, "I believed learning was important." In assessing their current feelings the Returners' mean response level to this statement was a more positive 4.8. Instead of 59 percent strongly agreeing with the statement when its context is regular school, 79 percent strongly agree when its context is the HSDP program.

Similarly, there is a shift to a more positive stance with respect to other attitude statements that relate to classroom experience. The Before-HSDP, mean response to "I really want to learn in school" is 4.4. The After-HSDP mean response is 4.6. The mean response to "I felt my teachers really wanted me to learn in their classes" shifted from a Before level of 3.8 to the more positive After level of 4.3. Teachers in the HSDP are more often perceived as relating their courses to work or careers than regular school

TABLE 6
ATTITUDES OF RETURNERS BY BEFORE AND AFTER HSDP RESPONSES
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION BY AGREEMENT LEVEL AND SUMMARY MEAN RESPONSE

Attitude	Agreement Level: Strongly Disagree 1	2	3	4	Strongly Agree 5	Mean Level
Learning Important						
Before HSDP	0	1	4	36	59	4.5
After HSDP	0	1	1	19	79	4.8
Wanted to Learn						
Before HSDP	0	1	8	41	50	4.4
After HSDP	1	1	1	29	68	4.6
Teachers wanted me to learn						
Before HSDP	1	12	22	38	28	3.8
After HSDP	0	3	13	34	49	4.3
Parents expected learning						
Before HSDP	1	0	10	29	60	4.5
After HSDP	0	1	14	31	54	4.4
Expected to graduate						
Before HSDP	1	1	6	27	64	4.5
After HSDP	1	1	15	17	65	4.4
Had ability to graduate						
Before HSDP	2	6	16	31	45	4.1
After HSDP	0	1	7	29	62	4.5
Courses related to work						
Before HSDP	6	14	39	30	10	3.2
After HSDP	5	6	25	39	25	3.7
Important to graduate						
Before HSDP	0	1	1	21	77	4.7
After HSDP	0	0	1	13	86	4.8
Counselors helpful						
Before HSDP	5	8	20	38	29	3.8
After HSDP	2	4	18	38	38	4.0
Had school friends						
Before HSDP	2	10	10	35	44	4.1
After HSDP	4	11	12	43	30	3.8
School treated me fairly						
Before HSDP	4	8	22	44	22	3.7
After HSDP	1	3	10	48	48	4.2
Lonely in school						
Before HSDP	32	40	11	11	7	2.2
After HSDP	38	39	10	8	4	2.0
Students friendly to me						
Before HSDP	0	7	9	49	35	4.1
After HSDP	0	2	8	59	30	4.2

Before HSDP N=93 Miss=54 After HSDP N=144 Miss=3

teachers (Before-HSDP mean response is 3.2; After-HSDP mean is 3.7). Finally, Returners indicate that their opinion of their ability to graduate had improved. The Before-HSDP mean response to the ability attitude statement is 4.1, while the After-HSDP mean response improves to 4.5.

What characteristics of the HSDP program account for this improvement in classroom related attitudes? Examination of Returners' responses to open-ended questions about what they like and dislike about the HSDP suggest several program features. These same responses are consistent with the educational empowerment model. Of the 147 Returners, 132 offered responses to the question of what they liked and 121 offered responses to the question of what they disliked about the HSDP.

Returners liked the program. Almost 60 percent of those responding (78 of 132) cited more than one feature they liked. About 20 percent gave extended and enthusiastic replies. In contrast, 52 percent of those responding (63 of 121) to the dislike question said, "Nothing," or made no true complaint. And almost all of the actual dislike responses were short and cited only one complaint.

Of the 132 Returners responding to the question about what they liked, 37 percent cite the schedule and hours of the program. Returners like the fact that the school day is shorter than regular school; does not start until 3 p.m.; and classes are not held on Friday. For Returners this schedule is seen as convenient and enables many to work during the morning and early afternoon. Some typical comments regarding the schedule are:

- I get to sleep in the morning. The hours are good.
- I can work full-time and still graduate early.
- It works around my work schedule.
- I like being able to go to work and still go to school so I could graduate on time with my senior class.
- Well, it starts at a good hour. Gives me time to get things ready or go to work, and we also get Fridays off which is great and I like to work [go to school] at night.
- It's convenient because I have a 9 month old baby to take care of and only in the night can my mom help take care of him.

Eleven percent of the Returners like being able to get a credit in only six weeks. Typical comments are:

- o It's fast, easy and you still learn as much as regular school.
- o It gives people another chance to graduate with shorter time.
- o The program is only 6 weeks long.
- o It's completed quickly.

About 19 percent of the responding Returners said they like the program because it enables them to get a diploma or gives them a "second chance" to earn a diploma. Earning a diploma is important to these students and the HSDP is seen in a number of cases as the only way to do so. Typical comments are:

- o It also takes me back to where I left off and helps me to finish up.
- o Get my high school diploma.
- o It gives an opportunity to the students to continue their education.

The schedule, the 6-week courses, and a second chance to graduate are all features of the administrative arrangement of the program that Returners well appreciate. They also like many educational characteristics of the program. Twenty-three percent of Returners responding to the question about what they liked about the HSDP said they appreciate being able to work at their own pace. Some comments are:

- o It's a whole lot easier to work at your own pace.
- o The hours are great and you can work at your own pace.
- o You also get to work really at your own pace and you're not getting rushed.

Twenty-three percent said they like the relaxed atmosphere of the program. Many who liked the self-pacing aspect of the program also mentioned the relaxed atmosphere. The relaxed atmosphere seems to mean

a lack of stress and competition, a feeling that work is easier than regular school, and an experience of less pressure to get work done. It is a better environment for getting work done because there is less pressure, smaller classes, and fewer students. Remarks reflecting these characteristics are:

- You don't have to compete with other people.
- The teacher and counselors don't hound you.
- The atmosphere is not so stressful. It makes it easier to work fast and finish work.
- Has a more comfortable learning environment.
- There's no pressure about the work, which is good for me because I have a bad attitude about people pressuring me when I'm doing the best I can.
- Night school is a much more relaxed atmosphere as opposed to the hectic, uptight attitude of day school.
- The atmosphere is a lot more personal and the peer pressure issue seems to cease from existence.
- There is not too much pressure, not too much work and no homework.

The ideas of working at your own pace and in a relaxed atmosphere are clearly related. It seems natural that students who performed poorly in regular school would appreciate a chance to begin again, to work without external pressure, and to be able to work at a pace at which they can succeed. In addition, students can move quickly through material they understand and this is also appreciated.

The quality of teaching and/or the teacher is mentioned in 33 percent of the responses about what Returners liked about the program. Teachers are characterized as nice, attentive to the student's needs, interesting, helpful, caring, really teaching, considerate and understanding. Some comments are:

- Certain teachers in the program teach me something new and important on a daily/weekly basis.
- They have very good teachers in the night program.
- The teachers are much more helpful and nicer.

- Interesting classes most of the time.
- The teachers help me a lot with my work when I need help.
- The instructor is nice and acts as if he wants his students to learn and be prosperous in life.
- I like the way the teacher helps each and every student with his discussions.
- The teachers really teach us.

Another feature of the educational program Returners like is the experience of being "treated as an adult." Almost 20 percent of those responding mentioned this. Apparently at least one-fifth of the Returners felt treated as a child in regular school compared to their more adult treatment in the HSDP program. This seems an important change for those who mentioned this experience. Some typical comments are:

- The teacher relates to me person to person instead of teacher to pupil.
- I make my own decisions.
- You can come and go as you please without people nagging you.
- One of the things that I like the most is that you treat us like adults.
- I can communicate with my instructors on a one-to-one basis instead of having to look up to them. I'm treated as an equal, not as someone who is inferior.

Returner preferences for self-pacing, relaxed atmosphere, attentive teachers, and adult treatment provide some evidence of the cycles proposed by the empowerment model. The HSDP student enters the program as a stranger to the staff and teachers, without the burden of a negative reputation to overcome. This breaks a negative cycle of mutual lack of respect and care that may have been established for many of them in regular schools. On the whole, Returner comments about educational aspects of the HSDP program suggest that the negative cycle has been broken and replaced by a positive cycle. Returner comments also indicate respect for their

teachers and an experience of being respected by them. This becomes a positive cycle. Returners appreciate self-pacing, a program feature that enables success. Stress and pressure result not from the requirement to perform but from a performance demand coupled with the student's self-conception of being unable to meet the demand. Apparently the stress and pressure are released when a student is freed of time constraints and can take as long as necessary to produce the required result. Once produced, this result builds confidence. HSDP school work probably is not easier than regular school work, as some student comments seem to indicate. Rather, the work may seem easier because it is successfully done and there is less confusion about the material. Likewise, the teachers in the program may not in fact be any better than teachers in regular schools. With the negative student/school interaction cycle broken, both student and teacher are giving each other a chance. When successful, students experience teachers as more interesting, more caring, and more competent.

Generally, Returners' comments suggest they are successful in the program because they choose to be there, and thereby, experience a higher degree of personal responsibility than they did in regular school. Here are a few comments that support this interpretation:

- One can work at one's own pace. One is responsible for his/her work.
- I feel a stronger responsibility towards finishing high school.
- No more idea of 'You have to do this,' simply 'You need and want to do this.'
- You are on your own and you kind of get to make up your own mind and I think that really pushes a person to do better.
- The attitude here is so good, I think, because the people here are not forced. They're doing it for their own good.

There were three other aspects of the HSDP program that Returners liked. Thirteen percent said they like the friendliness of the people in the program, including other students, staff, and teachers. Five percent said they liked being helped to find a job or develop their career goals. And five percent said that HSDP counselors were very helpful and caring, perhaps reflecting the higher ratio of counselors to students in the HSDP than in regular school.

When asked what they did not like about the program, 52 percent said there was nothing they disliked or did not name a true complaint. No complaint was mentioned by more than 8 percent of those responding. Eight percent

complained that breaks were too short. Seven percent said other students socialized rather than worked in class. Six percent had complaints about teachers, although these criticisms do not seem strong. Seven percent did not like the one class or credit per 6-week session arrangement and five percent would have preferred different class hours. Four percent complained of work that was too easy and four percent found the classes boring.

On the whole, Returners found much to like about the High School Diploma Program and very little to dislike.

Summary of Findings

Data analyses concentrate on three major areas regarding both Leavers and Returners: self-images and values; relationships with regular school; and peer and support relationships. In addition, Returners' perceptions of the High School Diploma Program and its effects on their self-images, school values, and relationship with the program are examined. The educational empowerment model asserts that students will leave school when their experience is dissatisfying and other alternatives are available. For leavers, school dissatisfaction almost always results from poor performance. Poor performance leads to the establishment of two cycles: one involving the student's self-image and values, and another involving the student's relationship with the school. These ensure that poor performance becomes self-fulfilling and self-generating. For bright students, a source of dissatisfaction can be a lack of meaningful challenge in classes. This can lead to inattention in class and, eventually, below expected performance.

Regarding self-images and values this study found that Leavers and Returners believe learning and graduating are important. However, leavers are less certain of their own motivation to learn or their ability to graduate. Both groups expressed a high level of agreement with the statement, "I expected to graduate from high school," but were not as certain about actually graduating as they were about its importance.

Regarding Leavers' and Returners' relationship with regular school, the findings indicate that six of the seven most frequently cited factors in the decision to leave school involved academic experience. Fifty-seven percent of the leavers said that lack of interest in and boredom with school were factors in their decision to leave. These were the second and third most cited factors. The most cited factor was attendance problems, which may be an outcome of lack of interest and boredom.

It seems likely that a student would lose interest in and become bored with school if he or she consistently failed to experience a personally or socially acceptable level of mastery of school work. On the other hand,

there may be no real challenge for bright students who can master their academic activities. The study found evidence for these explanations in leaver responses to open-ended questions. In responses to a question about how regular schools might have retained the Leavers and Returners, many indicated they did not perceive a wider meaning, purpose, or value in schooling. Leavers suggested that classes and school should relate more closely to preparation for work, careers, and "the real world."

Some responses to these open-ended questions support the theory that boredom and lack of interest are symptoms of a perceived inability to perform well, a failure to see a purpose or value in school, or a lack of adequate, meaningful challenge. The empowerment theory suggests that poor performance leads to loss of interest and boredom which in turn leads to more poor performance.

The study found that 28 percent of the Leavers and Returners had been retained at least one grade. Among Hispanics, 39 percent had been held back. To have been held back is a performance disadvantage when present performance is dependent upon prior performance for prerequisite knowledge and skills and a sense of confidence generated from successful experiences. Unfortunately, instead of success, many leavers apparently had experienced significant periods of poor performance.

While a majority of Leavers and Returners did endorse the statement, "I felt my teachers really wanted me to learn in their classes," 38 percent did not agree or were uncertain. This finding, along with certain responses to the open-ended questions, is evidence that a cycle of teacher/student lack of respect may have been established.

School counselors were not regarded as significant factors in either the Leavers' or Returners' school experience; they neither caused problems nor were very helpful.

Regarding peer and support relationships, this study found that both Leavers and Returners generally felt they had friends in school and that other students were generally friendly towards them. However, many leavers were lonely, perhaps alienated. Almost a third of the leavers agreed with the statement, "I felt lonely when I was in school."

A great majority of both Leavers said they were not involved in school clubs, teams or other activities.

Leavers and Returners said their parents expected them to learn in school. However, 33 percent had a sibling who also had left school before graduating. This calls into question the parents' behavioral commitment to learning and school.

Seventy percent of Leavers and Returners said they have a friend who also is a school leaver. This suggests they associate with those who, like themselves, are not academically successful, and perhaps are alienated.

Some leavers may leave school for reasons external to school. Forty percent of the Leavers and Returners said family problems or responsibilities were a factor and 26 percent cited work responsibilities as a factor in their leaving. Nevertheless, the overall sense of the findings is that academically-related experiences are the dominant factors in students' decisions to leave school. It is not hard to imagine that if school were a place to experience exciting successes and to realize meaningful goals and purposes, then family and work responsibilities would appear insignificant or could be overcome.

Regarding the High School Diploma Program, Returners indicated that they liked and appreciated the program. Furthermore, participation in the program seems to have had a positive effect on their classroom-related attitudes. In responses to the open-ended question asking what they liked about the program, Returners were clearly enthusiastic. This kind of response suggests that the HSDP may have substantially revived these students' interest in school.

Comparison of Before-HSDP attitude responses with After-HSDP responses showed that only those responses to questions related to learning substantially changed. In all cases, the change was positive. Returners showed a greater appreciation for the importance of learning; a stronger desire to learn; a stronger perception that teachers were on their side and related their instruction to work or careers; and a stronger sense of an ability to graduate.

Returners cited several characteristics of the HSDP that may explain changes in their educational attitudes. They liked the administrative arrangements of the program, including: the short school day; the 3 pm starting time; no classes on Fridays; and the short, six-week courses. The schedule was viewed as very convenient, enabling many to work during the morning and early afternoon.

HSDP Returners also liked the educational characteristics of the program, which include: working at their own pace; having a relaxed, noncompetitive, unstressful atmosphere, due in part to self-pacing and small classes; having attentive, helpful, and caring teachers who presented material in an interesting way; and being "treated as an adult." About 19 percent of those responding mentioned that the HSDP gave them a "second chance" to graduate.

The Returners' comments on what they liked about the HSDP suggest that in regular school they had been caught in negative learning experience cycles that were broken by the HSDP and replaced by corresponding positive cycles. Entering the program seems to have enabled them to begin again without the burden of negative reputations. They were respected by the HSDP teachers and responded by respecting them. They liked being treated as adults and responded by accepting more personal responsibility for school work and success in the program.

When asked what they didn't like about the HSDP, half of those responding said, "Nothing," and the other half complained about one or another minor issue such as breaks being too short.

Returners reported feeling much less stress in the HSDP than in regular school, in part because they felt they could take as much time as necessary to produce successful results. These success experiences may explain why they said classwork was "easier" and teachers were more caring and competent than in regular school.

IV. CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

There are two basic ways to consider school leaving. One is to focus on the individual leaver. Studies using this perspective assume that school leaving is an isolated problem that can be treated on its own terms. This has been overwhelmingly the perspective of school dropout research. Yet after years of research producing rather consistent findings, attrition rates across the nation are increasing rather than decreasing. The present study, to a large extent, falls within this traditional research focus on the individual leaver. However, it also reflects another focus.

The other orientation towards school leaving focuses on the system from which the student leaves rather than on the student. This orientation views students' school leaving as a product of an interactive complex of school and student factors. Rather than assuming that the student failed the system, this approach assumes that the system failed the student.

While both orientations are valid for research purposes, a focus on schools as interactive systems of problems and opportunities provides teachers, administrators, and policy makers with possibilities for actions that may make a difference in attrition rates. For example, teachers and administrators may be able to make schools less boring for those who are bored either because the challenge is too great or too small.

On the other hand, the focus on the individual leaver has produced little reduction in school attrition. Teachers and administrators find there is very little they can do about their students who are prone to leave school early -- those who have a sibling school leaver, or have been retained a grade, or are Black or Hispanic. These student characteristics cannot be changed. At the individual level, the unacceptable implication of the research is that the prescription for increasing school retention is to prohibit the potential leaver from entering the system.

Treating school leaving as an isolated student problem actually risks intensifying rather than alleviating the problem. The effect of identifying poorly performing students as "dropout prone" may be to completely extinguish their expectation of graduating. On the other hand, comparing the characteristics and qualities of schools having high retention to those with low retention may discern those characteristics and qualities that will retain students.

Very little school leaver research has been conducted focusing on the school. The present study, in a small and somewhat indirect way, does focus on the school. It compares leavers' experiences of regular school to their experiences of a different type of school, the High School Diploma Program.

Can this study tell us, at least in a general way, what needs to be done? If a focus on the school system is adopted and school leaving is assumed to be one of several outcomes of schooling, can this study point to some possibilities for increasing student retention to graduation? It can.

The findings of this study suggest that academic activities of regular schools hold no interest and are boring to many students -- many leave during the four years of high school despite their acknowledgement that learning and graduating are important.

Schools are uninteresting and boring for a complex interaction of factors. School is boring for many students because it is structured in a way that results in their academic performances being consistently and predominantly unsuccessful. It is boring for other students because it is not challenging and rewarding. If academic activities are not meaningful or valuable in some way, they will not interest students. This study indicates that schools have not yet succeeded in providing every student with a concrete reason to participate fully in day-to-day classroom work.

This study found that Returners were enthusiatic about the HSDP and had more positive learning attitudes toward it than toward their regular schools. This finding shows that different school structures have different effects upon students. Some structures are more likely to retain certain students than other structures. Careful and selective adoption by regular schools of some of the features that made the HSDP a good educational structure for school leavers may increase regular school retention rates.

One effective feature of the HSDP is a structure -- self-paced, one-at-a-time, short courses -- that enables students to be academically successful. To retain students and to increase their enthusiasm and productivity, regular schools need to find ways, as HSDP has, to eliminate failure and make it a place where everyone is successful. This means that schools should not be structured the same for all students. Many students need much more challenge than is currently provided; others need challenges that are not so far beyond their reach.

Changing the educational circumstances for individual students who are at risk of leaving school before graduation is a difficult challenge. On the one hand such students are poor academic performers, have low self-esteem, and many lack respect for schools and teachers. On the other hand school staff -- particularly teachers -- need to become more sensitive to the needs of the at-risk student. Working out the specifics of an educational approach that addresses all students' needs for success, approval, challenge, and meaning will be both challenging and rewarding for teachers and administrators.

Recommendations

Educational Philosophy:

- Reinforce the philosophy that the challenge is to make school work for every student.
- Assume that students who leave school before graduating are acting reasonably, given their school experiences and circumstances, and that if provided substantially different experiences and circumstances they may not leave.
- Reinforce the perspective that schools have the major responsibility and the power to retain students and, therefore, many solutions that reduce student attrition should be implemented at the school level.

Actions:

Schools should learn more about and better understand the problem of school leavers. In addition, schools should recognize their responsibiliby and power to take direct action to address the problem. Such action might include:

- Charging school staff members with learning about factors in school leaving and their responsibility and power to reduce student attrition.
- Strengthening the diverse learning environments, processes, and school structures that now exist and help students to enter and leave these with relative freedom.

- Enlisting faculty members as advocates for the school success of potential school leavers.

- Incorporating some features of the High School Diploma Program into an alternative school-within-a-school program available to potential school leavers. The program features should include:

    - flexible schedules and hours;
    - shortened school days;
    - shortened time required to achieve course credits;
    - reduced class size; and
    - allowing students to progress through the curriculum at their own pace.

The district should continue to study secondary school students' school experiences to refine its knowledge about that experience.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

1984-85 School Leaver Questionnaire

1984-85 SCHOOL LEAVER QUESTIONNAIRE

Background

1. Racial/Ethnic group identification: _____

2. Sex: (M or F) _____

3. Grade level: (9, 10, 11 or 12) _____

4. Age: _____

5. Have any of your brothers or sisters left school before graduating from high school? Y____ N ____.

6. Have any of your friends left school before graduating from high school? Y____ N ____.

7. Were you ever held back a grade in school? Y ____ N ____.

Were any of the following factors important in your decision to leave high school? (Check "yes" or "no" for each item)

Y	N	
____	____	Attendance problems
____	____	Lack of interest in school
____	____	Boredom with school
____	____	Academic problems, grades
____	____	Problems with teachers
____	____	Family problems/responsibilities
____	____	Disliked a particular course
____	____	Problems with principal/vice principal
____	____	Problems with counselors
____	____	Problems with other students
____	____	Discipline/behavior problems (suspension)
____	____	Felt too old for school
____	____	Financial problems
____	____	Work responsibilities
____	____	Transportation problems
____	____	Other reasons? _____

Circle the response on the scale that best describes how you feel about each statement.

Directions for Recording Responses:

Circle SA if you Strongly Agree

Circle A if you Agree

Circle U if you are Uncertain

Circle D if you Disagree

Circle SD if you Strongly Disagree

I believe learning is important.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I really wanted to learn in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I felt my teachers really wanted me to learn in their classes.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My parents really expected me to learn in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I expected to graduate from high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I have the necessary abilities to graduate from high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My teachers related their courses to careers or the world of work.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I believe it is important to graduate from high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My counselors were helpful when I had problems.	SA	A	U	D	SA
I had many friends in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel that the teachers, counselors and principals of my school treated me fairly.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I felt lonely when I was in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I was involved in school clubs, teams and other school activities.	SA	A	U	D	SD
Other students in my school were friendly with me.	SA	A	U	D	SD

What could your school have done to help you stay in school and graduate?

_____

APPENDIX B

High School Diploma Program Questionnaire

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

Background

1. Racial/Ethnic group identification: _____
2. Sex: (M or F) _____
3. Grade Level: (9, 10, 11 or 12) _____
4. Age: _____
5. Have any of your brothers or sisters left school before graduating from high school? Y____ N ____
6. Have any of your friends left school before graduating from high school? Y ____ N ____
7. Were you ever held back a grade in school? Y ____ N ____

Were any of the following factors important in your decision to leave regular day high school? (Check "yes" or "no" for each item)

Y	N	
____	____	Attendance problems
____	____	Lack of interest in school
____	____	Boredom with school
____	____	Academic problems, grades
____	____	Problems with teachers
____	____	Family problems/responsibilities
____	____	Disliked a particular course
____	____	Problems with principal/vice principal
____	____	Problems with counselors
____	____	Problems with other students
____	____	Discipline/behavior problems (suspension)
____	____	Felt too old for regular day high school
____	____	Financial problems
____	____	Work responsibilities
____	____	Transportation problems
____	____	Other reasons: _____

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

REGULAR DAY HIGH SCHOOL

Circle the response which best describes how you feel about the following statements regarding regular day high school.

Directions for recording responses:

Circle SA if you	STRONGLY AGREE
Circle A if you	AGREE
Circle U if you are	UNCERTAIN
Circle D if you	DISAGREE
Circle SD if you	STRONGLY DISAGREE

I believed learning was important.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I really wanted to learn in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I felt my teachers really wanted me to learn in their classes.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My parents really expected me to learn in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I expected to graduate from high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I had the necessary abilities to graduate from regular day high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My teachers related their courses to careers or the world of work.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I believed it was important to graduate from high school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My counselors were helpful when I had problems.	2A	A	U	D	SA
I had many friends in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel that the teachers, counselors and principals of my school treated me fairly.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I felt lonely when I was in school.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I was involved in school clubs, teams and other school activities.	SA	A	U	D	SD
Other students in my school were friendly with me.	SA	A	U	D	SD

What could your regular day high school have done to help you stay in school and graduate? _____

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS
Research Department

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM

Circle the response which best describes how you feel about the following statements regarding the High School Diploma Program.

Circle SA if you	STRONGLY AGREE
Circle A if you	AGREE
Circle U if you are	UNCERTAIN
Circle D if you	DISAGREE
Circle SD if you	STRONGLY DISAGREE

I believe learning is important.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I really want to learn in the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel my High School Diploma Program teachers really want me to learn in their classes.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My parents really expect me to learn in the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I expect to graduate from the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I have the necessary abilities to graduate through the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My High School Diploma Program teachers relate their courses to careers or the world of work.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I believe it is important to graduate.	SA	A	U	D	SD
My High School Diploma Program counselors are helpful when I have problems.	2A	A	U	D	SD
I have many friends in the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel that the High School Diploma Program teachers and counselors treat me fairly.	SA	A	U	D	SD
I feel lonely in the High School Diploma Program.	SA	A	U	D	SD
Other students in the High School Diploma Program are friendly with me.	SA	A	U	D	SD

What things do you like best about the High School Diploma Program?

What things do you dislike about the High School Diploma Program?

APPENDIX C

Leaver and Returner Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Transcription of Leaver and Returner responses to the question, "[Any] other reasons for leaving school?"

No.

Personal problems.

More interested in boys.

I just enrolled Mira Mesa High to finish the year. I had finished the school year in the Phillipines. I planned to travel with my mother and stop school and continue in September.

Missing 6 Weeks while in hospital.

Hospitalization.

Due to illness finding difficulty in making up work.

Didn't like the system at Pershing.

Afraid of being arrested due to being a run away.

Older sibs set bad example.

Diploma obtained in 'right' time.

Passed high school proficiency exam.

Taking C.H.S.P.., Turning 18, Not interested.

Family problems.

Moved too many times in two years.

I had to work.

I wanted to work.

Because she became pregnant.

Had a child.

Drugs.

Because I wanted to go into job corp.

Over-all boredom. Wanted to get on with my life.

Girl friend became pregnant.

Wasn't getting enough out.

A death in the family.

Family.

Severe family problems - "Mother left."

Afraid to approach school for help because family is here illegally.

Nothing interested me.

I didn't like Twain. I hated it there. It felt like a dummy zoo.

Coping with a death in family - wanted to stay home.

Felt distracted from other students in class and felt couldn't study.

Personal family issues.

Didn't like school in general.

Pregnant and married.

Teachers and counselors told him he was "stupid."

Father was ill.

Security (police), people outside of school looking for me.

Wasn't going to pass senior year. I felt funny about staying back a year - wanted to go to work.

Not much individual help.

Ditching school too much.

The school schedule was too slow. Nothing was practical in course work to help deal with life outside of school.

Pregnant at the time.

Sick for 42 days/medical excuse.

No motivation from home at time.

Found something better to do - beach.

Needed to make up credits in night school before continuing.

Wanting to get a start on career faster.

Needed more challenging classes.

Incident in time - Needed money and get a job.

Problems with the system - only 3 credits to finish. School indicated he coundn't just take 3 credits in the day but had to take 6 credits or go to night school for the 3 credits.

It was me that made the choice.

Wanted to work.

Transcription of Leaver and Returner responses to the question, "What could your school have done to help you stay in school and graduate?"

Nothing.

More understanding by teacher.

Nothing but I'm coming back.

The courses should be made more challenging. I found my classes very boring.

Have open enrollment.

Give me better grades, or grade easier.

I will graduate in adult school.

By not kicking me out.

Not much at all.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Cut the courses that don't have anything to do with making money or a living.

I think they should be more strict.

If the classes were not so boring, maybe I would have stayed. There should be more class to prepare for the real world.

Nothing.

They should make classes more interesting to the students. More programs.

Should be set up to help the student prepare for their future. Get a good job.

Nothing cause it was me. I thought it was boring.

Not school's fault.

Nothing.

Not so many enemies - perhaps more discipline if other problem students who were giving me trouble.

Felt teachers weren't understanding of the student.

More understanding as a person.

Explained more options of where I could go.

Called and asked why dropped out, more consideration of the student.

Check with student, to see what they're about.

More attention to value of school.

They could have made it more interesting.

Nothing, it was may decision.

Nothing.

I don't know.

Nothing right now.

Nothing really, they did all they could.

The school did everything they could. It's up to me now.

Teacher could have been more helpful.

Nothing.

Nothing I'm going to graduate.

Nothing.

They've done everything possible.

Physical problem with asthma.

Nothing.

Nothing they could have done.

Bus tokens, transportation was a real problem.

Nothing.

I needed to graduate early.

Make courses slower, easier like English, history. Mostly lack of interest.

I don't know.

Not much.

Teacher attitude towards students should be more caring.

The courses were remedial they need to be more advanced. Lack of teacher participation.

I don't know.

Nothing - I just wanted to get out.

Probably nothing - It was me.

Child care.

Take more time to help me with classes.

Nothing.

Moved from Sacramento. Adjustment problems.

It was my fault - I started to skip school - teachers are not on top of you to do your work. Not like my old school in Sacramento.

No.

More explanations.

Better classes.

They could have helped with my problems with my teachers.

Make it more relevant plus show me how to learn.

Nothing.

Gifted classes were not readily available - I got bored with regular classes. I was in gifted classes for nine years - then in high school I was taken out of gifted classes.

Nothing.

Nothing. It was something I had to put aside for the moment.

Nothing, it was all me.

Make it more interesting.

Provide part-time job counseling.

Counselor inadequately scheduled classes.

Student felt embarrassed over lack of success after given "chances."
Student needs support.

Help find part time job because I had to help support family.

Given a little more time for completion and a little more help.

Provide tutor.

Add new programs. Its boring - not interesting work should be harder.

Nothing.

Made it more interesting.

My Mom took me out. It wasn't my fault.

I really don't know.

I don't know.

Nothing really.

The courses were difficult. I needed more help.

Nothing.

Nothing.

More support from teachers.

My own problems - its wasn't the school's fault.

Nothing.

I don't know.

Made the process faster.

Not put so many hopes in passing classes.

Nothing. I just lost interest.

Change a few classes. Teacher problems.

Nothing.

Wanting to work and go to night school.

Made it more interesting/teachers more involved in class both with students and subject.

More interesting when had questions be more specific in answers by teachers.

Wanted to do own thing and there's nothing school could do.

Nothing - it was lack of interest in school.

Cut down on the senior finances.

Not to many pressures - howework and expected assignments.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing, make some major structural changes in the system.

Nothing right now.

Nothing more than they did.

Don't know.

School be more lax in their control.

More activities after school.

Make classes more interesting.

Nothing at this time.

Listened to me and not take me out even though mother wanted to pull me out for attendance reasons.

Changed my classes - ones that I wanted to go to.

Nothing at this time.

Wanted to do work independent of others without disruptions from other students.

Should've let me stay in original school of enrollment rather than transferring me.

Less strict and more fair (attendance issues).

More individual help from the teachers.

Make the classes more specialized and individualized.

Teachers having more respect for students.

More individualized help in some of my classes.

Nothing at this time.

Better opportunities to get into accelerated classes even though grades may not have indicated it.

Working on my job hours and classes to fit into working hours I had.

Nothing at this time.

Made classes more age related.

Nothing at this time.

Teachers were getting on my case for not finishing homework and thus wanted less homework.

Teachers could have explained class work better.

Nothing at this time.

Nothing at this time.

Been more sensitive to my age and helped me get into jr. year.

Nothing at this time - possibly relating courses to outside world of work etc.

Make the classes more interesting and shorter.

Relating classes more to careers.

Paid more attention to those who needed help - make classes smaller for that help.

Be a little more sensitive to medical absence.

Nothing at this time.

Confusion with parents doing traveling and unsure what to do school wise.

Nothing at this time.

Organize school more efficiently.

Help me to deal with peer progress.

Put blindfold on teachers to teach all kids - Don't pick out the ones who will learn before they actually motivate them.

Clean up the drug problems and teach students how to relate to one another.

It was getting to be too slow a pace and I wanted to get out.

I don't know. I had problems with attendance so I said forget it. I wanted a part-time exemption - maybe halfday would have stayed but denied.

Not really.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Different teachers and classes I wanted to take.

Nothing at this time.

Nothing at this time.

Talking more with me about some of the problems I was having.

Had what I wanted for a career with my school classes.

Nothing at this time.

Have less classes and work and shorter hours in school.

More challenging classes.

Nothing at this time.

More flexibility in taking required courses (wanted to take them at a different time in school).

Nothing at this time.

Nothing at all.

Helped me with a new program - presented me with a variety of different programs in school to keep your interest.

Allowed me to be transferred to another school when I wanted it.

Allowed me to take 3 credits during the day.

Teachers should go to Garfield to learn how to cope with kids - talked with students and about their problems in their life. Give me a break. I was sick they didn't believe me - now I have a negative attitude.

Having stronger discipline - more consistent.

Have a program related to the student who must work - home study.

Too late in year to finish. Was in the hall.

My own problems - It wasn't the school's fault.

Teachers could have explained class work better.

Uncertain.

Teachers should have controlled the talking.

Uncertain.

I didn't want to stay - they did.

Teacher. Too much discipline - some teachers don't care.

Make it a bit more interesting.

It's not the school - but somehow make it more interesting - keep noise level down. Couldn't work in high noise area.

Taking into consideration the student needs - help the students with special needs when they don't catch on.

Nothing.

APPENDIX D

Returner Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Transcription of Returner responses to the question, "[Any] other reasons for leaving school?"

I hate school.

Left for one semester to attend 6 educational weeks in Israel.

Everything.

None.

Wanna die.

Personal problems.

None.

Nothing.

Mental/emotional breakdown.

Moved here--counselor from Madison said it would be better here.

Some of these questions relate.

Drug bust, friends were entrapped.

None.

No comments.

Morning sickness.

Boys.

Would have been two credits short but over on the High School Diploma I made it.

None.

No answer.

Because the classes were too hard.

I just didn't feel like going to school that early in the morning.

Not enough credits. Fast diploma.

Was in hospital for 2 months with asthma.

Couldn't get up (was sick).

Academic problems caused by illness.

The drugs, sex, and judgemental atmosphere of both students and teachers.

Problem with no police action towards a person who followed me to school for a year and a half.

Nothing.

Term papers.

None.

Need to work.

Didn't like being late, so didn't go.

Didn't communicate with people.

Didn't really care.

Immigration problem.

Too long in school.

Had to make up credits.

Married.

I don't have enough credits.

Big problems with family (father and brothers).

Family problems.

None.

No.

Only needed two credits.

You do not have enough help.

Moved to this area, started to work in the day.

Too many concerts.

Wanted dead or alive.

Problem with pregnancy.

I had a baby (got pregnant).

None.

Transcription of Returner responses to the question, "What could your day school have done to help you stay in school and graduate?"

Be cooler.

Told me before or in the beginning of the senior year that I was to need extra credits.

I will be in school and will graduate.

Not have kicked me out of here.

Have been shorter hours.

Nothing

They would of help me more than they did

I did stay in school

Me leaving school had nothing to do with the school itself. I had personal differences which kept me away.

Less boring/nicer teachers.

Help me graduate sooner and work fulltime.

Nothing.

I am really not sure.

Nothing, it was my personal problem and my choice.

Let me go to Madison.

Work at my own speed.

Classes are too big.

Nothing.

Very much like get a good job.

Don't remember.

Kept me away from some of my friends.

I'm in the 10th but it could help alot.

Shouldn't have kicked me out.

More caring.

More interesting.

Student group therapy

Not have bugged me so much about coming to class late.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Be more involved.

Went to class.

Not so long.

Nothing more.

Help out more.

Counselors to help me.

Keep me in class.

Not ditch.

I should have done better in discipline/behavior.

Had a choice of better classes.

Nothing.

Nothing. They were unwilling.

Given me less complicated classes.

Let me take classes I felt would help in in the future and not make me take electives like G. Arts, gym that won't help my future.

Stopped the policy of automatic failure with 10 absences per quarter.

Nothing really, I just felt that I had more important things to take care of in my last year like concentrating on career goals and work.

Get rid of the drugs, sex, and judgemental extremely unhealthy atomsphere.

Nothing.

More flexible attendance.

To have the teachers treat you more like adults rather than children, inferior to them (the teachers).

Nothing.

Help everyone not just rich kids and cut down the hoods.

Get me out of history and English.

I don't know.

No reason.

Have better term paper topics.

Don't know.

Not have been so boring.

I had a good time.

Listened to what I wanted and try their best to get me it.

Change vice principal, make classes more exciting.

Nothing.

Helped me out. Let me know ahead of time about my credits.

I did not drop out. I'm making up credits.

Transcription of Returner responses to the question, "What things do you like best about the High School Diploma Program?"

Break.

Teacher pays more attention to student's than in other HSDP.

I enjoy working independently. I also like being able to make up credits without having to attend summer for the same courses. Being a student who does not attend day-school I am content with the diploma program's time schedule.

You work at your own pace. They treat me like an adult. And you work on one thing at a time in class.

They treat the people like adults. You can work at your own pace. You don't have to try to compete with other people.

The classes are pretty kick back. It's easy to get credits. It's shorter than regular day school. You can work at your own pace. It's at a good time.

I like the hours and mostly all teachers and I have a chance to make some money in the mornings.

Sleep in the morning.

I like the teacher. I like the hours.

Well, the High School Diploma Program is different than the other, the best thing I like about the diploma program is that the teachers they so nice to the student and they treat you good and we get to see some film and we have great times, I think I like that.

It gave me a chance to make this up and the teacher relates to me person to person instead of teacher to pupil.

The hours are convenient and the work is fair.

I get to sleep in the morning. The hours are good (3-8).

Interesting classes most of the time. Can smoke in parking lot. I make my own decisions. Feel I'm in with people on my level.

Graduating.

Its quick and not real complicating. The teachers and counselor don't hound you. It's more adult, as in you going or coming. I can work fulltime and still graduate early. I really like the High School Diploma Program.

Getting closer to getting my diploma.

That we can work at our own pace.

That you do not have a rush on homework.

What do I like best about the High School Diploma Program? There are many aspects of the program I like. I don't have as much pressure and stress put on me and I am able to work at my own pace. The atmosphere is more quiet and relaxed and friendly. I can communicate with my instructors on a one-to-one basis, instead of having to look up to them. I'm treated as an equal not someone whose inferior.

It's fast, easy and you still learn about as much as regular school.

You can work at your own speed and it is possible to work it around my work schedule

It's a hole lot easier to work at your own pace. The people are really great to work with. The teacher is a real likeable person. The atmosphere is not so stressful it makes it easier to work fast and finish work.

The hours, the work, the people, not a zoo.

The teachers a help to me a lot with my work when I need help.

Work your own time. It's peaceful. Teachers don't drag you to work, etc.

I like the High School Diploma Program because, it help me get a job and helps me to deal with other people and, to know how to deal with people, and also to learn how to discuss, and not be shy. It also takes one back to high school. And it also helps me to finish my life and freshen my day.

We get out before dark, the hours are all right.

I am in school learning.

The hours and the way the subjects are taught and here I'm treated as an adult.

The hours, class size, the people.

I like the hours we have to come. The teacher and students are nice and sweet. I've learned alot from the High School Diploma Program. The H.S.D.P. has a more comfortable learning environment for me. My instructor is nice and acts as if he wants his students to learn and be prosperous in life.

I like the way the teacher helps each and every student with his discussions.

Because one it doesn't start until 12:00 noon and I like the people in there, the work we do and the teachers are excellent. If I would of had teachers like I had over there in the High School Diploma over in regular high school I probably would have been a much better student and the staff people in the office are terrific and all other teachers to.

I like the way the career development class gets people jobs. They haven't gotten me one but, I hope they will.

Involvement, learning many things I didn't know, timing is good gives people another chance to graduate with shorter time.

It's convenient for my schedule because I sleep good until 12:00 noon. Then at 2:30 struggle to work so, its pretty convenient.

That there are not many kids in here and you can get more help and its a good time to come to school, and that the work is that I can do it.

The hours because I can work in the morning, and I like my teachers.

The teacher Mr. Aquino is very nice and tried to help out much as he can and we have a good understanding between ourself.

They help me learn what I have miss in my high school. I even think I learn more here and like it even more than my high school. They even help me learn alot. The teachers really teach us.

The teachers are nice and kind. They take the time to help you on your work and they explain to you what kind of work to do and we get into groups and discuss the papers or our feelings about the movie or the story we read or see and they're trying to make us learn and get a good job and get our high school diploma.

I like to get out early and the note work.

I like it because it gives me alot easier chance to learn. I've got a really cool teacher real easy to understand. When I first come I wasn't really interested-but I am willing to learn. There's a lot of subjects I like. Thanks for counseling so I am going to stick with the program until I graduate.

I wanted to enroll in the High School Diploma Program because I didn't want to stay low on my credits and waste my time at doing nothing. I like this program because I think I got a chance by letting me enroll in here and I think it is an easy class and I think both of my teachers treat the students fairly. I like this program but for next year I plan on going to a regular school.

The hours are good because I can sleep longer in the day and I can watch stories on T.V. and no school on Fridays. I can go out and look for a job and take care of other important things.

I don't know but I like this way better than the all day school program. There is something about this that I like. I get better grades than before. I don't like the other school. I like the H.S.D.P. It's great I rather be here than in any other school. I like very much the teachers and staff are very nice and understand.

It's convenient. Because I have 9 month old baby to take care of and nice to me. Very helpful, so we get along well.

Uncertain I guess the people in the class and the experience.

The course is a better environment from day school. There are fewer people in the classroom. You are with people your age. You are treated more as an adult. The teachers and faculty are nice people. You work at your own speed. You get help and ask questions where you want. The class doesn't seem as banal and treacherously long, you can eat and drink in class, its late in the day.

It gives an opportunity to the students to continue their education.

It gives kids who are having problems in regular school whatever they are, a chance to graduate from high school in their class. It allows us to get up when we want.

I have an opportunity to get credit through this program and receive my diploma; whereas without it, I would not have received one due to Physical ed. credit deficiencies. The program is only six weeks long. The teachers are fair and professional.

We get to work at our own pace. There's no wasted work time listening to teachers lecture but they are always there if we need them to explain something. And there's no pressure about the work which is good for me because I have a bad attitude about people pressuring me when I'm doing the best I can.

The fact that one can work at one's own pace, one is responsible for his/her own work. Night school is a much more relaxed atmosphere as opposed to the hectic uptight attitude of day school. I like the fact that students are allowed to eat, drink and bring tape recorders to class. I feel that they should be allowed in day school because, as our classes have proven, we don't litter everywhere or disturb others.

Everyone can work out their own pace. Also I feel a stronger responsibility towards finishing high school. I like the idea of it being all up to me to finish the program. I also like the fact that I only have to take courses that I need to graduate and not all those unnecessary courses just to fill up my schedule. I much rather use that time for working, which I do since I have dropped out of high school.

The things that I like best about the high school diploma program are the classes are small and the work is much more concentrated. I am able to finish or do my work at my own pace, which is a lot quicker than regular school. I am and always have been a straight 'A' student. The atmosphere is alot more personal and the peer pressure issue seems to cease from existence. The people here, I am sure speak of sex, drugs and rock and roll, but it is not pushed upon some one. I suppose where my problem lies is that where I was raised all of the goals and striving were not pushed on me but there was a selfless environment and I seem not to be able to live in the western culture and that is why my only goal for the future is to live the life of a Buddhist nun in monastic arrangement.

You work on your own schedule. Its completed quickly. You're not treated like a child. Its up to you to go, no one else cares.

I like being able to go to work and still go to school so I could graduate on time with my senior class. I liked it only being 4 days a week. I liked Mr. Swenson being a teacher of the school.

You can come and go as you please without people nagging at you.

It gives us the opportunity to work at our own pace. We get more individualized help and teachers may recognize us as deficient in certain areas. The 6 week rate of obtaining credits makes it easier to attend classes everyday. This is a good opportunity for high school dropouts to prove that they can achieve their goal.

The teachers and the counselors.

It's a way to make up credits at your own pace. It's not in the early morning when I'm too tired to work.

The teachers and the work.

Time-going at your own paces and there not alot of people not crowded.

You get out when your work is done.

The reason why I left day school is because of work knowing I had 2 more credits to complete and I worked at the same time. I decided to keep my job and enroll in the High School Diploma Program. I work in the mornings and go to school right after work. I wanted to complete my other subjects too but I sort of got tired and bored of it because after work at night and school at day. I felt really restless in school so I fixed my whole schedule up and decided to work mornings and school at night. This way it is much easier for me.

The ability to work at your own pace and to express individual ideas in writing and speech. Also, that when you complete the course, that you will have the satisfaction of earning your high school diploma.

They teach kids how to graduate and get jobs.

The way the teachers treat me.

It's give me a chance to do my work my own pace and give me a chance to know my self and understand my self better.

Very little homework. Have a day job.

The hours are great and you can work at your own pace.

It helps you get your diploma (thats what everybody needs).

Mrs. Barnhart is very helpful. It allows one to work on their own. Teachers don't push the work on you. You can work on your own pace. You get a break.

You basically work at your own pace, and you each get individual help. You understand things better.

Not going so many hours a day. Not having a teacher to say you have to do something.

The teachers relate and communicate with the students really well. I like the High School Diploma Program because its easier to make up the necessary credits I needed because there is no loss of time. We are treated like adults in every respect. There is not all the interruptions of day school activities. The more advanced students try to help the slower students.

I really like being treated like an adult. I like having enough time to get ready for school. I like having more work and less talk from the teachers. The students here do their own work and not rely on others to finish their work so that they can copy. I like being around a smaller group of people compared to a whole high school full of students. Most students here are alot more mature than in ordinary school.

The courses themselves. The independent format of the program. Being treated as adults. No pupil argumentation nor harrassment. Condensed time schooling schedule. No more idea of "You have to do this", simply "You need and want to do this" such as attendance, work, etc. The smoking privileges. The 10 minute breaks.

What I like most about the High School Diploma Program is that there is not too much pressure, not too much work and no homework, and its better for the people who work in the morning. One of the things that I like the most is that you treat us like adults and you have the library open for us once a week.

I learned to use my writing skills more, it fits in with my work schedule. What I really like is the counselors and teachers. Mr. Hoye our head counselor has helped and worked with me more than my day school counselor. And the teachers are cooperative and considerate to the students.

The things I like best about the High School Diploma Program are the good writing skills and the fact that you are on your own and you kind of get to make up your own mind and I think that really pushes a person to do better and follow instructions, want to get your diploma and be a successful person.

I like everything about the evening program: the hours, the work, the students, the counselors, the teachers, being treated like an adult, no one hazzles the students, and no noise.

I like when the counselor tell me you are going to graduate this year. I feel happy and another thing is because I have many chances to take my diploma this year.

Well it starts at a good hour that gives me time to get things ready or go to work, and we do get fridays off which is great, and I like to work at night, and we're allowed to smoke on campus which not many schools allow that is O.K. Its much better than day school so keep it up. People really do like night school it's more helpful, convenient for them.

I like the method to obtain credits in the High School Diploma Program. The 55 hours passed by rather quickly. I like the way the program is set up, 4 nights a week, 5 hours a night, and fridays off. I like being able to be more free at breaks than regular high school students.

The teachers are very understanding. The hours are shorter, and the students are nice and easy to get along with.

Everyone tries to be nice to one another and no one fights around here.

That it gives a second chance to finish high school for those of us who for some reason had to drop out of day school.

I can make up the credits I need to graduate. I can sleep in.

I like the High School Diploma Program because I don't have to stay long.

I like being able to complete a credit in 6 weeks.

You can get credits faster to graduate.

I like getting out on fridays. The work is not too hard.

That we have 10 minutes break.

I like the teachers and Mr. Hoye who's been a great help to me and everyone in H.S.D.P. The students in night school are really fun and you get along with everybody, just like a family.

I have less time to mess around instead of a semester it is 6 weeks.

I think only thing that I like about the H.S.D.P is the program itself.

They are many friendly people, counselors.

I like the way it is helping alot of students by giving them a second chance to help them get their credits to get their diploma.

I like the High School Diploma Program because I have alot of friends that go there. Another reason why I like it is because they gave me a last chance to graduate. I would have dropped out if they sent me to another school. Most of all I like the program because I go to school at night, so that gives me time to work in the mornings.

You're more freer to do what you want and you have more time to study and you also get to work really at your own pace and your not getting rushed Another reason I'll be working during the daytime.

First of all it fits into my schedule. Second there are certain teachers that teach me something new and important on a daily/weekly basis and third, I can earn my diploma quicker and go into college faster.

Well I like High School Diploma Program cause they give you longer classes to learn more and because it is fun and you get along with your friends and teachers make class interesting and fun.

I like it because its more easier than day school. I never was in this program. This is my first time. You could meet more people. I have more fun I do like the teachers.

What I like best about the High School Diploma Program is that if it wasn't for this program I wouldn't graduate this year. I wouldn't have the opportunity to do it. I would of probably just dropped out. I'm am really happy with this program because it doesn't only help .. but it helps other people too. They have very good teachers in night program too. That's another thing about it.

I like the hours in the High School Diploma Program. I like the idea of working only on two subjects at a time. I like the way the program works.

I like the High School Diploma Program because its alot better than day school its easier to work and learn and the teachers are much more helpful and nicer.

The teachers and counselors will help you when you have a problem with your classes in day school. My counselor was never in, when she was she would always tell me negative things and say that I wasn't doing good and stuff like that. So I went to my diploma school counselor and he helped me pass before I was suppose to, telling me what classes I needed for graduation.

The S.D.H.S.D.P. is a great program for many reasons. First, the time scheduling is very beneficial to those who need to fulfill their education 'quota', and carry a job in the business hours. Secondly, the teachers are understanding and wish the students well by showing their patience and knowledge, and their willingness to help and teach each and every student The teachers are to be congratulated for doing an excellent job. This is a commendable program.

What I really like best is that for us that attend High School Diploma it gives us a chance to make it, to get our diploma and its real helpful. My teachers here are great and I don't have any problems with other students. I am learning alot especially in my law class.

I like the attitude of the teachers, and you can in some classes learn at your own pace that's good. The attitude is so good, I think, because the people here are not forced they're doing it for their own good. And it's an excellent program if you are short on credits. No way is this a drop out school and the people going here should not be put down for trying.

I like night school because during the day I can go to work.

The teachers are cool. I got alot of friends in the H.S.D.P., that's what makes it so fun to come. The work is easy and I like coming at night. The hours are good too. You don't have to get up early. I think the the H.S.D.P. is a good thing for some kids who have problems in day school. And you have choices in picking your own classes. No P.E. either.

I think its pretty cool we get to smoke on campus.

That thing I like more is that you learn to write better.

I like the High School Diploma Program because you can get a credit in a short amount of time. The High School Diploma Program treats the students like adults, the responsibility of attendance is placed on the students. The 2 hours in class are usually quiet and fast in time.

The teachers are pretty nice and they have a good sense of humor. You learn things that will help you out later on in life.

The career decision classes. My teachers has informed me that this class won't be here next session. I feel this class is great and it helps students learn more about what they want out of life or help them find what they really want to get into. I feel there should be more elective classes at least for the student with one class. It should be more fun like holidays or something.

I like the high school diploma program because it helps the student to graduate.

Its better, cool and teachers.

You can get a credit in 6 weeks.

The time is pretty good.

It is less boring than day school. And make people work more and it is faster and you don't waste your time taking other classes that you'll never learn anything.from. I think you should divide grades by grade and put every person in their level because I know alot of guys who get out of night school and don't know anything why because the teachers do not make them work hard.

I like the courses that are being taught.

I like the way they help me to complete my high school credits.

Its the only way to get out of school.

The classes are not very long in days, very convenient.

Its convenient because I have 9 month old baby to take care of and only in the night can my mom help take care of him. The teachers are nice to me. Very helpful so we get along well.

I don't know yet.

I like the schedule because I get more sleep.

I like being able to complete a credit in 6 weeks.

Transcription of Returner responses to the question, "What things do you dislike about the High School Diploma Program?"

That break is only ten minutes and Mr. [redacted] looks like Elmer Fudd.

It only has 1 class every session.

If I was attending day-school I could find coming to school again being very lengthy. Since I don't I'm quite satisfied.

Most people don't do work in class but me and Mellissa Cher do our work.

That some people just come to fool around.

Nothing.

Not enough breaks.

Nothing.

There is nothing wrong about it, it is just that you go to school late and come home late. And is not that many people that why you sometime get bored.

It is boring.

The amount of work is a lot but they do give you enough time to do it. I feel the class isn't social enough but then again that's why I left school, it was too social for me.

No way to make up time in one semester.

They don't let you carry books home.

People wanted to talk too much and I couldn't concentrate on my work.

Nothing.

The work.

I've only been in this program for 3 weeks, but I'm glad I made this decision. I can't find anything I dislike about the program and consider myself lucky that it was here for me.

Too strick on attendents.

School needs to be brought up to date.

Not a blank thing.

My U.S. History class you have to have all your work and all your hours plus 2 book reports. In that other classes its as soon as your hours are up and when all your works done.

Not one thing.

None.

The only thing I really dislike about it is because it's kind of hard to get to school I don't have transportation back and forth, besides my leg and backbone.

That we only get to miss two days, but other than that I like everything.

About some of the people.

When the teachers are late.

No elective classes.

Nothing.

Nothing.

There is nothing that I dislike about the H.S.D.P.

I dislike having to stay the full time in class.

Nothing except there in a bungalow.

Mr. [redacted] and his lies.

Having messed up, having to be here with these children.

Nothing.

That you can only miss 3 days and that not fair because if you get real sick its not your fault that you might have to stay out for a week. It should be more than 3 days I think.

That we can't work independently and get more credits.

No dislike I can think of right now.

Having problems with them is trying to find a baby sitter for the mothers. That's all I can think of. It's hard to find a child care nearby.

That they don't have child care from 12:00 to 5:00 o'clock and its hard sometimes to have someone to take care of my baby all those hours.

I don't like that you don't get enough credits.

There is nothing I really dislike about the program except break should be longer.

The only thing I dislike about this program is that I don't know nobody but I guess this is good for me because this way I'll behave more better and I'll probably will get a better grade.

Sometimes the teacher will get smart with you for no reason and if you say anything back to them they give you that I can drop you from my class story.

Nothing at all. I like this very much.

I don't have any.

Alot of the other kids think its a place to fool around and get wasted on beer and drugs. They distrub the rest of the class with their loud talking and music. They leave their trash all over, ditch classes, false sign the roll sheet and give a bad name to us who try to make a good example. They don't deserve to be in the class if they continue this.

Its located in a place where only heavy metalers hang out.

The teachers cannot control the classes sufficiently. The students who disrupt class time and time again should be permanently dismissed so as to give the serious students time to study.

It's getting too crowded.

I feel that now, (the last session of 1985) the administration is pressuring us, trying to make this more like regular school, as opposed to last session.

The only thing I dislike is the rush-rush of everything. I guess that's because this is the last session.

I am unable to think of anything at the moment, but I am sure there is something.

The students from day school, they have bad attitudes. You have to stay and make up a certain amount of hours even though your work is completed.

I dislike that the teachers didn't seem to care alot. I disliked that once the work was over you could leave.

They still treat you like you are a child not an adult.

There are no elective classes for those who already have their academics out of the way. Sometimes it is mixed up, like when you are given a contract and the work sheets do not correlate or we run out of tests. A lot of the kids have a "who cares about school" attitude.

The long hours.

The only thing hard about the program is that I'm too much of a social person and it's hard to concentrate on work especially when I'm with all my friends especially reading.

Nothing.

Really how the five hours go.

I don't like the 60 hours that you have to make up.

I dislike the lack of teaching in the High School Diploma Program. I guess I'm not used to it because I'm usually a very understanding person when it comes to listening.

That they don't have a morning program also.

Too much schooling and too much studying.

None.

Everytime someone is late 10 minutes they get an extra 5 or 10 minutes (he or she) is late.

There is really nothing I could say about night school except I enjoyed doing the work especially my own and everyone I met were just all nice.

You really don't get enough credits in H.S.D.P.

None.

Some teachers not as helpful. Break could be longer.

The attitude of other students in the classroom. They aren't there to graduate, instead they go to visit with friends.

Nothing.

School work thats it. I don't like school, I would rather work.

As for the seniors that are graduating this year of "85" they lacked information on graduation. The bathrooms rarely have toilet paper and soap.

The program not extending through summer. The program not starting earlier and ending earlier.

What I dislike most about the H.S.D.P. is that the breaks are too short. You should put all the breaks together so we can have like a dinner break. And the other thing that I dislike is smoking, I don't think you should let the students smoke because its like the students don't have any respect for the school.

The High School Diploma Program needs more variety; such as geometry, more electives. Some of these are needed toward our diploma.

There's really nothing that I dislike about it so far. I've only been here for 2 sessions and its all pretty much under control. Except I think there should be more security in and around the campus and mostly the parking lots.

Nothing.

I don't like when in summer I have to come because everybody goes to see your families and I can't go to that parts I have to come to summer school but this is part of the program.

There's not enough fun classes. I like to type and I only got that class once in the whole year, and there's not too many new students here and the breaks I think should be five minutes longer. And a week off every six weeks then you'd have alot of students believe me.

Somethings I dislike is the people. I also dislike the food. I wish we had longer breaks. I dislike the tardy marks.

I don't dislike anything. The High School Diploma Program is a great.

Nothing.

Hardly no girls.

The breaks are too short.

None.

It is not too easy.

Nothing.

I don't know.

The thing that I dislike is why do we always have to have 1 credit every 2 classes from night school, I think you should change that one or two more credits.

None.

I think you guys should have harder work because you have lots of students that the work is too easy and they be getting the highest scores, and its not fair for the people that don't understand very well to compete against them. You should divide your classes.

You get tired sometimes, the classes are so boring after sitting for awhile. You get out so late when everybody's at school.

There are some teachers that prefer to do other things more important than teach. Example: They would rather have us read a chapter and answer questions without a discussion, therefore we are practically not learning anything except completing the work. As to the teacher giving a discusssion and explaining, we would learn the important motive of the chapter being written.

None.

I don't think I have any dislikes for this program. Everything in this program has everything it needs. That's how I feel.

There isn't anything wrong with it I think it's the best program I've been in.

It's too cold, bad food, break between classes too short.

Need more material; more material relating to the subject at hand.

What I dislike is that we don't get enough time at our break. We should get 15 minutes instead of 10 and when night school starts we should have a bell ringing at 3:05 PM and another one at 3:10 PM, the 3:05 is when we have to get to class, 3:10 is when you are late.

They should have bells just like in day school, otherwise there is not much to dislike about this program its very good.

Classes are too long I think it should be 1 1/2 HOURS.

There is not really nothing I dislike in the H.S.D.P. except on the days when I wake up on the wrong side of the bed. That's all.

Too many hours, 2 per period in one class. The classes should be 45 minutes a period long but four periods a day is okay.

That too boring and that you get out too late.

Some of the classes I've taken in the diploma program were boring and I dreaded going to the class because the class failed to interest me or to capture my attention.

Not much, just that I should be doing better.

This school has no spirit none I mean no dress up day or parties, dances.

I dislike about High School Diploma Program is that the classes are boring.

Getting up at 6:30 in the morning I get very sleepy and can't do the work I just can't help it.

None.

It's O.K. but I think you guys need some more communication with students.

I dislike the program when you have to wait 6 weeks to get a credit when some students can do 6 weeks work in 3 weeks and then they have 3 weeks of nothing to do. I think that you should try the program of letting as soon as they finish one course.

They should make GED test equal.

Needs longer break time add five minutes more.

I think maybe, there should be more selection of classes.

I don't like getting out so late.

Report prepared by Robert B. Barr and Gary W. Knowles

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